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ADVENTURE

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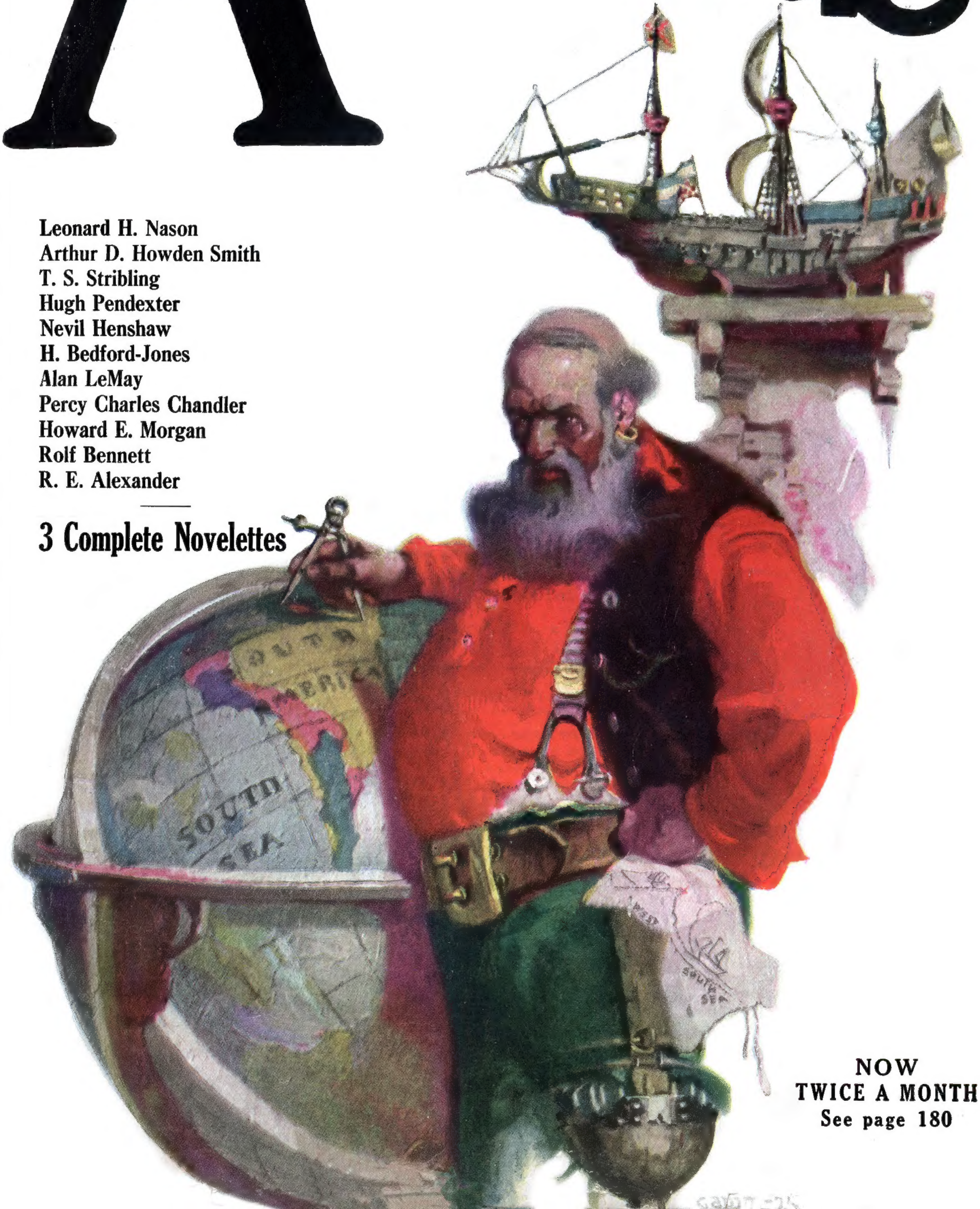

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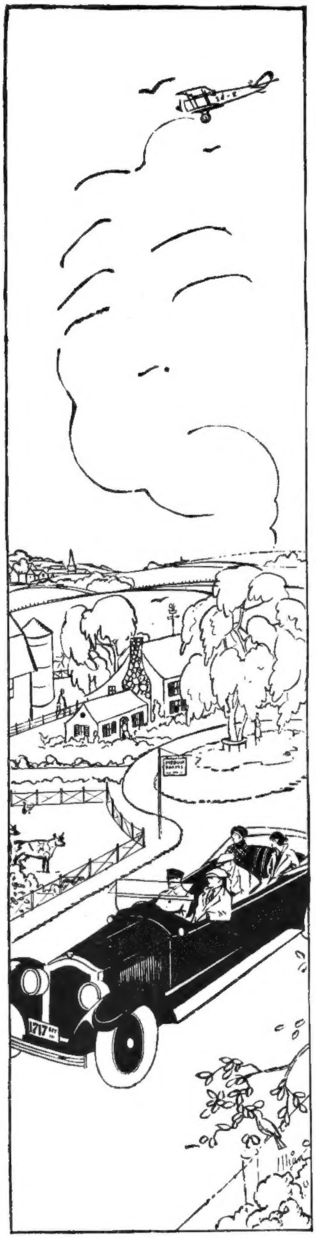

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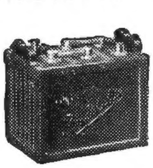

Up Against A Stone Wall

—and with no idea what he can do!
Do you see yourself in this picture?

THIS is a talk to men and women who are UP AGAINST A STONE WALL in life, and who want to cut their way out.

It is a talk to men and women who have the courage to search their souls for their defects, ADMIT THEM, and start at once to lick the things that UP TO NOW have licked them.

Take stock of yourself—where are you? Once upon a time you dreamed of great things. You were going to DO SOMETHING worth while. You were going to BE somebody. You entered upon your career with burning hopes. Everybody thought highly of you. Your friends, your family, figuratively patted you on the back. You felt you were destined for great things.

Then—what happened? Your youthful enthusiasm oozed away. Your purpose for some reason became clouded. Instead of going forward, you found yourself UP AGAINST A STONE WALL.

Other men, aiming for the same goal as you, came up alongside of you and passed you. And now, here at last you are—discouraged, lost, PURPOSELESS.

When you think of the men and women whom you have seen succeed, you know that you are every bit AS GOOD AS THEY. You know you possess the same—possibly more knowledge, more ability, more intelligence. You believe that, if given the chance, you could PROVE that you're a better man.

Right here is the bitterest pill of self-confession, if you have the MANHOOD to swallow it. You must admit that those successful men and women were willing to make a real struggle for what they wanted, WHILE YOU GAVE UP THE FIGHT TOO EASILY—or else DIDN'T KNOW what weapons to use!

If there is any pride left in you, if you still possess a glimmer of your fine early ambition, YOU WON'T FOOL YOURSELF WITH EXCUSES. Nor will you admit that YOU ARE LICKED; or that you are too OLD now or too TIRED, to win out.

You will take a new grip on yourself. YOU WILL PLAN YOUR LIFE. You will acquire a new clear-cut purpose, instead of drifting. You will analyze the WEAKNESS IN YOURSELF that held you back, and you will STRENGTHEN IT BY TRAINING.

You can do it,—by means of Pelmanism, a system of training that has swept the world. Over FIVE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND men and women, in every quarter of the globe and in every walk of life, testify that THIS TRAINING WAS EXACTLY WHAT THEY NEEDED. It is exactly what YOU need!

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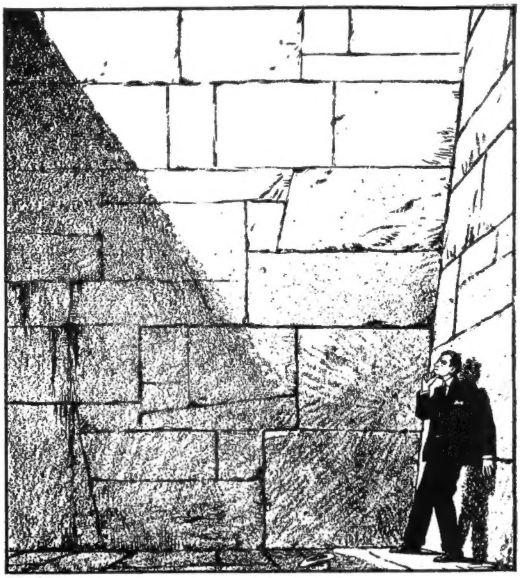

Frank P. Walsh, Former Chairman of National War Labor Board.
T. P. O'Connor, "Father of the House of Commons."
Sir Harry Lauder, Comedian.
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Gen. Sir Frederick Maurice, Director of Military Operations, Imperial General Staff.
Admiral Lord Beresford, G.C.B., G.C., V.O.
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Prince Charles of Sweden.

—to mention only a few out of THOUSANDS of men and women of distinction.

A fascinating book called "Scientific Mind Training" has been written about Pelmanism. IT CAN BE OBTAINED FREE. Yet thousands of people who read this talk, and who NEED this book, will not send for it. "It's no use," they will say. "It will do me no good," they will tell themselves. "It's probably tommyrot," others will declare cynically.

If you are inclined to think that way,—USE YOUR HEAD FOR A MOMENT! You will realize that people cannot be HELPED by tommyrot, and that there MUST BE SOMETHING in Pelmanism when it has been used by over 550,000 people just as intelligent as you, when it has such a record of helpfulness behind it, and when it is endorsed and used by men and women of the highest distinction and ability all over the world.

Don't give up on your old ambitions. Don't think it is TOO LATE. Don't think you are TOO OLD. Follow the advice of such people as those listed above. Write for this free book; at least LEARN what Pelmanism is, WHAT IT HAS DONE FOR OTHERS—then, and then only, judge whether it may not help YOU just as greatly.

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April 8th, 1926

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Volume 58
Number 1

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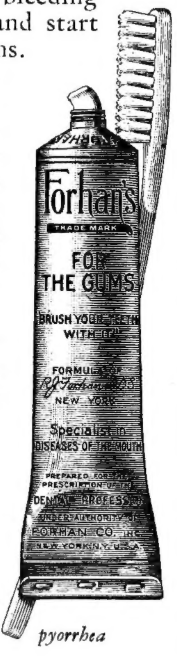
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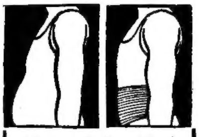

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Cover Design . . . . **D. Cammerota**

Notice

BEGINNING with this issue ADVENTURE will be published twice instead of three times a month. The dates of publication will be the 8th and the 23rd. See note in Camp-Fire of this issue, page 180.

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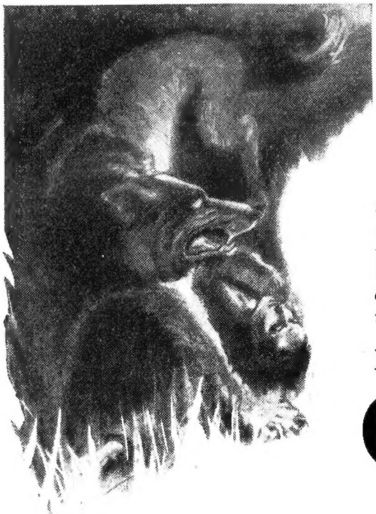

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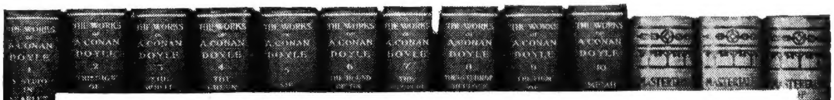

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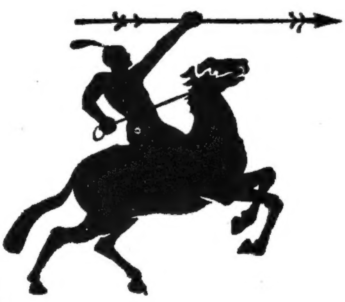

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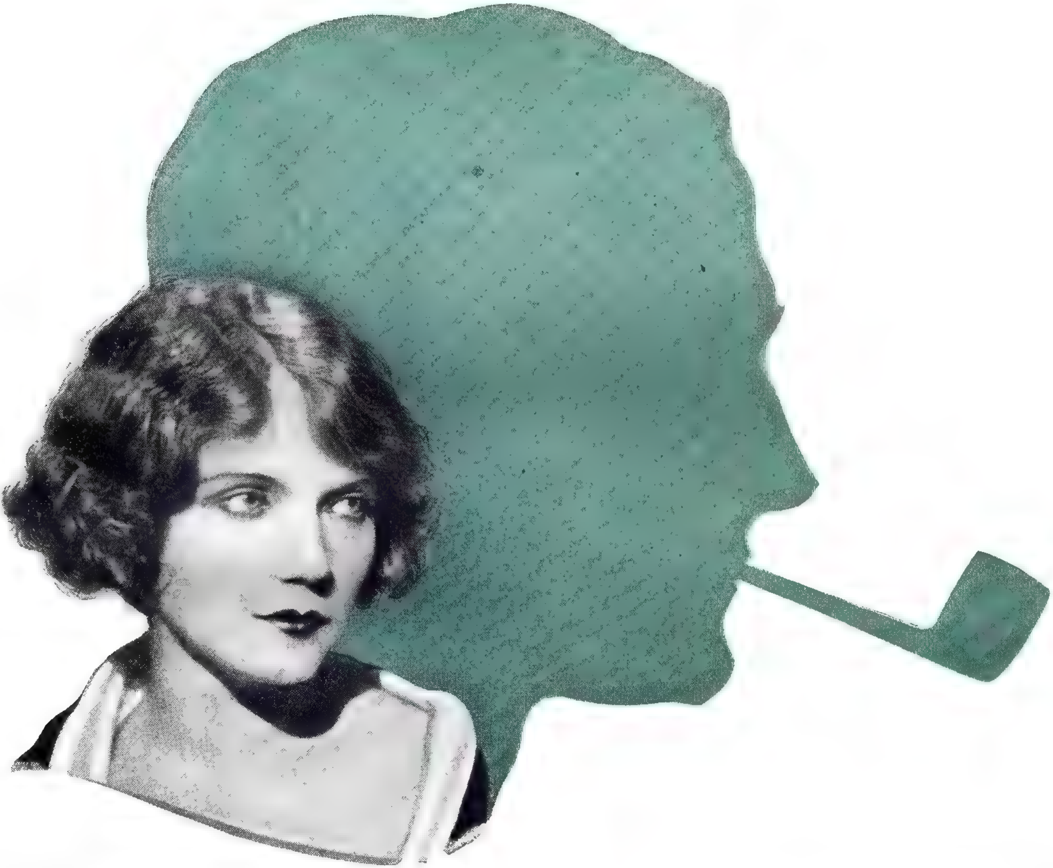

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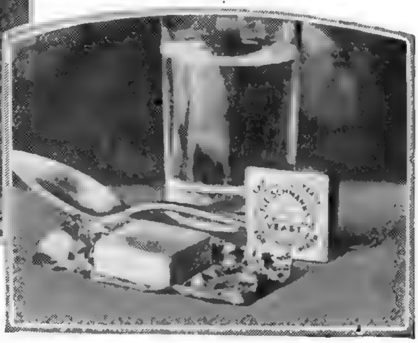

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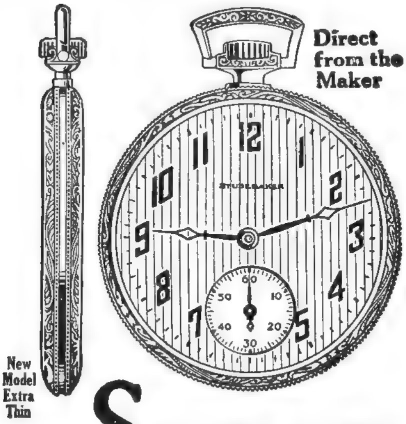

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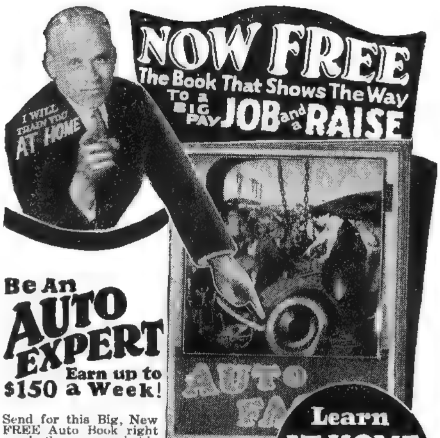
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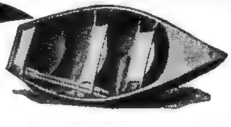

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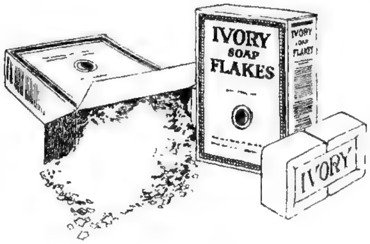

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Adventure Vol. LVIII. No. 1 April 8, 1926

*Christ in Chicago

A Complete Novelette

By T. S. Stribling

Author of "Fombombo," "A Passage to Benares," etc.

"And the people built themselves great idols of stone and bowed down and worshiped them."

MR. HARVEY MEACHEM, one of the editors of the Chicago *Tribune*, stood in the window of his office in the sixty-third story of the *Tribune* Building and pointed out to his friend, Lawrence Page, of Richmond, Virginia, other behemoths of ferro-concrete which lifted their vast heights into the gale blowing in from Lake Michigan.

With the peculiar personal pride of a Chicagoan in his own city, Meachem directed his visitor's eyes to the Gas Building, the Radiator Building, the Airways Building, the freight Terminal Building, and so on and on until it seemed to Larry Page that he was looking out on a series of Brobdignagian altars erected to the different mechanical necessities of life which stood perhaps in the relation of patron saints to this vertiginous Chicago.

Mr. Meachem himself usually wore a certain hushed—one might say a deprived—air, as if something which he had hoped would come out of his genuinely commanding editorial position somehow had slipped away from him; a most ordinary human occurrence, but from this particular point of view, and discoursing on this congenial theme, his inhibitions happily dropped from him and he wandered into one of his brilliancies, which, written out in the columns of the *Tribune*, had made him an intellectual force in his city not altogether negligible.

"Do you realize, Page, that the height of those skyscrapers is as indicative of the pressure of human population in Chicago

---

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as the height of a column of mercury is of the heat in the air. I stand here and look out at each new skyscraper and think, 'Going up, going up, summer heat, blood heat, torrid! We have fourteen million population in this city now."

Page shook his head slowly by way of wonderment and admiration—

"Fourteen million—but you can't see a single person from up here. The people look like a thin stream trickling along the bottom of a cañon."

"Certainly from up here you lose sight of the individuals completely. Sometimes I think my office window must resemble the seat of the Olympian gods. One sees the trend and currents of humanity, but not its accidents. If some particular person down there on the boulevard should fall or stumble or die, you could not possibly detect such a detail from this height. The current would flow on exactly as it did before; moving into sight, moving out of sight; nothing would be affected; not the slightest deviation—"

Here the editor lifted his eyes from the formicary working far beneath him and rested them on the great altars to Mines and Freight and Gas which stood out boldly against the wind-swept sky. His face fell, his brief afflatus failed him and he breathed a characteristic sigh.

"Well—that's history; that's life."

Larry Page drew back inside the room and made little preparatory movements of departure. The editor handed him a copy of the *Tribune* from his desk.

"Take this along with you and see what the fourteen million are doing. Did you see what Strachan said in the morning's paper?"

"Who is Strachan?"

"Chairman of the Board of Health. This morning he was talking about tightening the eugenic laws. His text seems to be, 'We breed race horses, why not men?' " Meachem made a grimace of humor, then turned from the matter. "Come have dinner with me at six this evening. I live with a Mrs. Harran, 138 West 486th Street. You'll know the place because its a little six-story cottage quite lost among the apartment buildings It has a rose bush and a lilac. Then you will probably like Mrs. Harran; she is an advanced woman and really is close to Strachan. Now and then she has tipped me off to things the Board of Health were going to do before the reporters got it. Strachan may possibly be there himself—if you like monologs. Don't forget, six sharp."

Page promised not to forget and, taking the damp copy of the *Tribune*, walked out into the corridor, took an express elevator and a moment later gasped at the sudden tingling in his throat and chest as he dropped sixty-three stories to the street level.

* * *

THE most noticeable thing about the boulevard on to which Lawrence Page stepped was the hushed noises of the passing throng. This silence was elaborately arrived at. The Virginian stepped out of the *Tribune* Building on to a pavement of crêpe rubber. No horns nor klaxons were on the two streams of motors which flowed silently up and down the boulevard. On the bronze traffic towers Board of Health signs enjoined silence on the hurrying crowds. In the moving mass of humanity groups or couples spoke to each other in undertones.

Once Page saw a Swedish laborer break into a roar of laughter at something he was reading. A policeman touched his shoulder. The fellow was offended.

"I bane yust laughing, meester—"

"Suppose every one in the street should break out like that?" suggested the officer.

The Swede glanced around, apprehended the shoals of humanity flowing about him, then folded his funny paper and moved on in silence.

This hushed effect reminded Page of walking through a hospital zone in Richmond, and it brought him a certain associated impression of ill health, of universal malaise.

He had no reason for this fancy beyond the mere quietness and repression of the avenue. Indeed this morning crowd not only was well dressed and prosperous but seemed in splendid physical condition.

Now that his attention was called to the fact, he observed in all the thoroughfare no cripples, no blind, no legless men pushing themselves around on little wheeled platforms such as are common in any city. A sober, good health seemed to bless the passersby. And Page thought, fair-mindedly enough.

"This really is an extraordinary and delightful place to live in. Mere pressure of human population had brought about such regulations as make life all the pleasanter. Any man of culture and taste would find life here a very great pleasure.

And as he strolled along, musing on the charms of this great regimented city, the young man quite involuntarily drew a little time-table out of his pocket and noted the time of the next express going South. At the same moment a thought flickered through his head of telephoning Meachem that he had received a message from home recalling him on the instant.

However, the next moment this foolish impulse was dissipated by the sound of a man's and a woman's voice quite near him. They were debating some point in passionate undertones. The girl was saying, in a slightly foreign accent—or perhaps, more precisely—in the habitually unstandardized English of some one of the foreign colonies in the great metropolis:

"But, Col. Morgan, I won't show you where it is! I don't know myself!"

"I have it here on the card," persisted the old man in the shaky tones of the aged.

"I don't want to know. I say, let's go back to our own flat down on Water Street."

The old man turned his face toward the girl, and Page saw he was blind.

"To Water Street! You want to get me to that quack, that mountebank, Hevesh—"

"It wouldn't hurt you to try him!" asserted the girl in a quick undertone, moving her black eyes about the crowd to see if any one overheard her.

"No harm and no good," denounced the old gentleman, "and I've got a ticket, a card from the Board of Health admitting me to a specialist, to a Doctor Person." An appealing tone suddenly quavered through the old voice. "Take me to him, Vita, and I'll see again. I'll see the city. I'll see your sweet face. That will be the first thing my eyes will fall on when Dr. Person takes the bandages off my eyes, my dear Vita's face—"

Here the ancient slid his hand along the girl's arm and caressed her face with the delicate cognitive touch of the blind.

There was something so wistful and affectionate in the movement that Page was moved toward the old man. He went up to the two.

"What address were you looking for?" he asked with kindliness in his tones.

The old man turned clouded eyes on the Virginian.

"There you are, Vita. This gentleman will show you."

"I want to get back to Water Street. We room at 213 Water Street," said the girl in a frightened tone.

"No," protested the old man, "I have an address here on a card which they gave me at the city clinic—"

He fumbled in his musty waistcoat.

To Page's surprize the girl, Vita, put up her strong hands against his search.

"Don't get it out, Colonel!" she whispered tensely, and as she glanced up Page was astonished to see tears in her black eyes.

"Why, what's the matter?" inquired the Virginian.

"He wants to have an operation on his eyes," trembled the girl weeping.

"He seems to need it very badly."

"Yes, he needs it. He can't see at all."

"And it isn't what you would call dangerous. Even if the operation isn't a success, he will be no worse off than he is now."

"I—I want him to go to a—a doctor who doesn't cut," quavered the girl.

"She wants me to go to a quack!" declared the ancient indignantly, "a kind of faith healer named Hevesh."

"A faith healer!" echoed Page looking at the young woman.

"I see you don't believe in him either," said the girl unhappily.

"Now, now," soothed Page, who considered himself very liberal-minded about just such themes, "I don't say these faith doctors aren't any good. Certain diseases, yes. If one is nervous and hysterical, yes, but a broken bone, no. Now, a cataract in the eye—I'm sorry to say, no. A cataract is an actual thing, you see. You can't get rid of a lump of cinder in your eye by believing it isn't there, can you? Why, no. Now, if this old gentleman had some imaginary trouble, I mean if he was in good health, I'd say go to your faith doctor, but when there is something actually wrong—"

"There you are, Vita!" cried the old man. "The gentleman agrees with me. Those were almost exactly the words I have said myself. 'When you are all right the healer will keep you from going wrong.' "

"Well, it looks to me like," said the girl moodily, "if he could keep you from slipping he could pull you back."

Page was faintly amused at the unintelligence of the girl. He glanced at her broad, kindly face and her heavily molded body displayed through her dress by the whipping of the gale.

"No, no! You are arguing now from a metaphor. Not allowed."

"Well, anyway," cried the girl desperately, "Father Hevesh is a good man. He's a kind man. He's not a machine who doesn't care a bit more about you than a fly!"

"But after all," smiled Page, "the object of an operation, miss, is health, not sympathy."

"There you are, Vita!" repeated the old man joyfully. "A person must be healthy and whole, that—that's the object of life, isn't it, sir?"

"I hardly know what is the object of life," Page smiled reassuringly into the girl's dark, apprehensive eyes. "I suppose health is as good an object as any."

"That's it!" cackled the oldster. "As good as any; the best of all when you haven't got it. Sir, allow me to introduce myself. I am Colonel Morgan of Kentucky, sir, and this young lady is Miss Vita Orloff. Her parents were Roumanians, but she was born here in Chicago."

Page shook the hand of each. The girl, Vita, had hard, strong, young fingers, which nevertheless were feminine and the impression of which lingered in the Virginian's hand for several moments after he had released them.

And the touch of Page's own hand must have had some effect on the girl, for she asked, evidently out of a dawning trust—

"Do you think it would be safe for him to go to this Dr. Person's office?"

"Why, undoubtedly. He is in the service of the free city clinic, isn't he?"

"Ye-es."

"Then he is bound to be good in his line."

She gave in reluctantly to the young man's judgment. She looked at the card which she had rescued from the blind man.

"It's—No. 14 Rush Street."

She stood studying Page a moment longer, then her deep bosom lifted in a sigh and the three turned toward the given address.

They were not far from the place. The two younger folk walked along slowly, adjusting their pace to that of the old man. The ancient rattled away cheerfully about himself. As he had said, he came from Kentucky. He had invented a concave mirror screen for motion pictures to give them depth of perspective. It was the sort one saw everywhere nowadays, but a company had swindled him out of his patent and he had had nothing by it. This girl, Vita Orloff, took care of him now. She was a wonderful girl, the kindest-hearted girl in the world. He hoped he could regain his sight just to see—

Here Vita interrupted his praise of her to say—

"That's a queer place for a doctor to have an office in."

PAGE saw they had reached the address on the card. It was an old villa, an antiquated private residence which the march of enormous apartment houses along the thoroughfare had somehow left marooned in an old garden. Once it had been the residence of wealth; now apparently it was deserted. Its windows and doors were boarded up. It stood in the unkempt lawn, a blind old house confronting a blind old man.

The girl Vita stared at the old pile a moment, then clutched Page's arm.

"O-Oh, I don't want him to go in there!"

Page himself looked at the place somewhat dubiously. Then he saw a caretaker trimming some box shrubs in the tangle of undergrowth. He called the fellow to him.

"Does a Dr. Person live here?" he inquired doubtfully.

The caretaker shook his head.

"No one lives here, sir."

"We were directed to come here."

"Occasionally a doctor uses this house for an operation, by appointment. It's fitted up inside. Have you a card?"

The girl, Vita, began weeping.

"Oh, I don't want him to go in there, I don't want him to!"

But as she said it she handed the yellow pasteboard to the caretaker. He received it woodenly and examined it minutely as if interested in its specks and flaws.

"You can come in," he said, and unlocked the gate.

Vita started in with her ward, but the caretaker took the colonel's arm.

"Visitors is not allowed in the operating rooms, miss."

The girl stopped with her hand to her breast.

"I can't go in!"

"No."

"Who will bring him out?"

"I'll bring him out, miss."

Vita's voice trembled with the beginning of some protest which she never made as she watched the ancient creep off with the caretaker to the boarded up house.

Page stood looking at the girl, moved with pity at her apprehensions for the old man. Evidently she was one of those primitive types who feel an instinctive fear of submitting themselves or any one they love to the cruel-looking instruments of surgery. The Virginian attempted to soothe her with the usual optimism of the stranger who had nothing to lose—the colonel would come out all right; an operation to remove a cataract was not very serious; he himself knew a number of cases etc., etc.

The girl seemed scarcely to hear, and so presently Page made his adieus to the silent, unresponsive figure and continued on down Rush Street to a cab stand. Here he threw his unread paper away, since it must have been two hours old and so therefore was out of date. He bought another one of a newsy, a later edition, and stepped into a taxi.

Page unfolded his paper with the leisure of a Southerner and alternately glanced at the headlines and then out of the cab at the towering cliffs of the apartment buildings beneath which he was passing. The motor in which he rode was a cabriolet. Its hood was drawn back so he could look straight up at the amazing vertical perspective of these great human cenacles.

Ten, twenty thousand persons in one apartment house; a smallish town within four walls. And this unit was multiplied innumerable times to make Chicago. Such a labyrinth of life oppressed Page. He received a vague feeling of how infinitely complex it was; what a stupendous enterprise it was. He wondered what force in human nature ever could have brought about such an amazing culmination.

Presently his eyes tired of the sunshine reflected from the upper reaches of the skyscrapers. He pushed up his top, blinked his eyes and began turning through his newspaper. It contained no crime news at all. All personal articles were compressed in the smallest space possible. Thus King Alfred the Third Dies at Windsor occupied a half column with a twenty-four point head, but a discussion of the international effects this death would cause, written by an English publicist, was given full page streamers.

Two lines on the second page stated that a man calling himself I. Z. Hevesh had been arraigned before the Water Street police court and warned for practising medicine without a license. The fine was remitted. Col. Thomas Morgan, of 213 Water Street, the inventor of concave mirrors for cinema productions, died under ether while undergoing an operation on his eyes.

Page puckered his brows and read this notice again. Then he looked at the hour of the edition of the paper. He drew out his own watch and noted the exact minute and hour of the morning. Finally he leaned forward and wound down the glass partition which separated him from the driver.

"Chauffeur!" he called. "When did I enter your car? What time was it when I bought this paper from the newsboy?"

The taxicab man, who was a Czecho-Slovak, glanced back at Page with that faint disdain which a foreigner feels for a man who simply grew up in America, without, one might say, any national background at all.

"I didn't know you bought a paper, sir."

II

THE flavor of oddness which hung about the collapse of old Colonel Morgan in the queer operating room on Rush Street, and its amazingly swift appearance in the Chicago hourly papers lingered with Lawrence Page even when he dined that evening at the Harran home with his friend Henry Meachem.

As the editor of the *Tribune* had surmised, Mrs. Harran had still another guest for the evening meal, Dr. Strachan, of the Chicago Board of Health. Strachan was a smallish man, and like all small men, when unopposed by other small men, he formed the hub of the dinner conversation.

Page could not determine to what race Dr. Strachan belonged.

He had a yellowish mongoloid face of the most changeful eager moods. At one moment his eyebrows piqued in quizzicalness; the next his face was concentrated in probing seriousness. Then he was telling a jest and appraising his listeners out of half-closed, brilliant jet-black eyes.

When Page was introduced to him Strachan gripped the Southerner's hand sharply and said:

"Hope you have come to Chicago to live, Mr. Page. We need your slow big-boned Southern stock to mate with us nervous little Jews. It would be more effective than the 'silence' signs on the traffic towers, eh, Mrs. Harran?"

The table laughed, all except Millie Harran, the daughter of the hostess. Strachan's mask shifted. He thrust a thick yellowish forefinger at Page and pursued his idea of selection with characteristic vehemence.

"The Incas had the idea—state initiated marriages. Who can say but what that ancient idea of the first Americans may return to the United States?"

"Perhaps the mere material surroundings here," suggested Meachem, "eventually generate that idea in any immigrant population; it's the *geist* of the land."

"That's mystical," snapped the surgeon, "*geist* of the land is mystical. The soil in this land is the same as in Europe and Africa. The people on it squirm about and get driven into efficiency, and the swiftest route to efficiency is through controled reproduction."

Millie Harran, the daughter of the house, asked in a low tone—

"Efficiency for what, Dr. Strachan?"

"Millie, you come from Ireland," laughed the doctor. "That's a contradiction in terms. The moment you ask 'what?' you admit there is something worthy of being efficient for. Your 'what' there is selective."

The pale girl blushed and became silent.

"I don't believe," said Page, "Americans would ever resign the right to select their wives."

"Our present eugenic laws are already a negative method of controling human mating. Imagine the cumulative effect of deciding who shall and who shall not marry in a population of fourteen million!" The surgeon gave a queer foreign click of excitement. "It's godlike! The real reason of the old Russian dèbâcle was that Trotsky and Lenin imagined the fundamental ills of humanity were economic. They were not; they were vital—uncontroled reproduction. As if a gardener should sow weeds, grass, fruits and thistles all together."

The surgeon turned swiftly to Mrs. Harran.

"Take it from a psychologic point of view. Whoever heard of a new idea being injected into a skull already formed! *Tck!* Impossible! When a child is born it is too late to attempt to educate it. Begin with the parents. Select them."

At this point in the surgeon's monolog, the girl, Millie, risked timidly again—

"Dr. Strachan, what of—love?"

The whole group turned and looked at the thin, pale girl with hair the color of raw silk, who sat by her mother near the head of the table.

The surgeon paused with the look of one stopped in the midst of an intellectual sprint.

"Propinquity, Millie, propinquity will take the place of love in the future as it has always done in the past. That is the most helpful feature of feminine psychology—a woman loves any man she's thrown with. On that fact the directors of humanity can build a people of genuis."

The girl's face turned whiter and she said nothing more.

There was a sort of flair about Strachan's monolog which tossed Page's fancy into a vision of some highly keyed future for Chicago—a city of specialists, of master workmen, of geniuses, building still huger and more terrific buildings; everything growing, swelling; and, after all, what was this sweaty climb aiming at? Why such regimentation of souls? Through some mental connection Page thought of the faith healer. A vague notion came to the Virginian that while the man, Hevesh, could not cure cataract he might possibly answer the question which had formed in his heart. Because, after all, to ask the purpose of anything leads straight into mysticism whether the querist will or no.

Meachem's voice broke through Strachan's talk to ask Page what he had done with himself during the day. The Virginian told of his encounter with old Colonel Morgan and the girl, Vita Orloff, and then of Morgan's death which he saw immediately afterward chronicled in the paper.

"The thing that puzzled me," said Page, "was how quickly the paper got the news. I left the old man slowly entering the house on Rush Street. It seems to me I walked directly to a cab stand and bought a paper. Then I drove off in a cab. When I opened my paper there was an account of Colonel Morgan's death in it."

Dr. Strachan twitched up a quizzical brow.

"You probably remained talking to the girl longer than you thought. A man sometimes does."

"Besides that," added Meachem in unsmiling seriousness, "a death in a public hospital is telegraphed immediately to medical headquarters and from there to the papers. We probably knew it and had it in type before you had gone a block." The editor withdrew from the topic. "Did you observe the disturbance the tenement folk down on Water Street made over the arrest of a kind of wandering faith healer named Hevesh?"

"Faith in what?" quirked Strachan.

"Our reporter didn't say," laughed Meachem.

The girl, Millie, with her pale face and shadowed eyes, arose and excused herself from the table.

The talk went on concerning Hevesh. The president of the Board of Health developed his peculiar abhorrence of mysticism. He alleged it a fact that ignorant people believe and trust what they do not understand more readily than that which is clear and logical.

"This Hevesh is playing the —— with our clinical practise in the tenements. Thye accept his nostrums instead of our medicines."

Page recalled that the girl, Vita Orloff, wanted her charge, Colonel Morgan, to go to Hevesh instead of to the hospital on Rush street.

"A fair example," declared the surgeon.

"But if he had listened to her he wouldn't have been dead now," observed Page with a dry smile.

"I assure you," retorted the surgeon keenly, "that other Water Street intellects will make good use of the same point."

"Most men are convinced when they are killed," rejoined Page. "It stops argument."

Mrs. Harran interposed in this rather blunt fencing between her guests.

"I'd like to see this Hevesh. I've heard a good deal about him through the social workers. Let's run down to Water Street after dinner and make a slumming party of it."

"Good," agreed the surgeon, "I wish we could get more proof that he is practising medicine without a license. He has been warned for that offence by the courts, I believe, another violation would jail him."

The junket to Water Street was decided upon. Dinner was finished. The other members of the party went to get wraps and light summer coats for the drive through the lake breeze. Page was left alone in the dining-room. He remembered some cigars he had left up in Meachem's room, and started up the stairs slowly, thinking of the theories Strachan had advanced, thinking of Mrs. Harran, of the girl Millie.

The surgeon himself was a peculiarly dynamic man and his hatred of mysticism impressed Page. But after all there was no way to avoid mysticism; at some point every man's knowledge ended and his faith began—

A stifled sobbing stopped Page and drew him back to his surroundings. He found himself standing just in front of Meachem's door, which was a little ajar. The Virginian glanced through the editor's sitting-room into his bedroom and with a little shock of surprize saw Millie Harran half reclining on the bed, her face forward in her arms, shaken with sobs.

The Virginian's surprize was so blank that he ejaculated almost unconsciously—

"Why Millie, what's the matter?" and opened the door.

The girl looked up, controled her breathing and said unsteadily—

"It—it's what Dr. Strachan said d-downstairs!"

"You crying about that?" Page's tone was half sympathy and half curiosity.

"Don't you see how terrible it is?" cried the girl with surprize in her own voice. "Don't you see how terrible it is for all of us?"

"I—well, perhaps—of course—" the Virginian waited a moment rather at sea and Millie went on—

"None of us have b-been bred selectively," gasped the girl, "If we h-had been made for any p-particular purpose, then w-we wouldn't have been we at all—we'd have been somebody else. According to the way he t-talks, nobody just has to be. We are all accidents. We might just as likely never have been at all. Then there can't be anything so very fine about us, can there, Mr. Page? I-If we might not have been then there c-can't be anything so-so very p-precious or sacred about us can there?"

Millie's lips quivered and her eyes again filled with tears.

Page stood looking at the girl, touched by this vague wo of adolescence. He divined that Millie was in that recurrent malaise of girlhood when every suggestion acts almost with the force of a physical shock upon her. He caressed her shoulder gently.

"Let's don't cry about that, Millie. Flowers are planted accidentally where they grow, but they are very sweet and lovely and sacred too, I guess—"

Page could imagine the voice of Strachan interposing—

"Sacred to whom?"

Well, he, Page, didn't know. His thoughts drifted on. He wondered momentarily why Millie had come to Meachem's apartment.

The girl perhaps felt his query, for she put a little ghost of a smile on her pale face and said—

"I like the smell of cigars in this room."

III

MRS. HARRAN'S party drove to the Water Street district in a motor, and on this junket Page's introspective mood was dissipated by Dr. Strachan's rapid talk and the somehow simian changes of his yellowish mongoloid features. Certain phrases the surgeon uttered stuck in the young man's head. As the motor entered the tenement streets, the doctor flung out a hand at the rabble of squalid children playing in the alleys—

"The hopelessness of this situation is that these people do not so much fall into squalor as they pursue it. It's their habitat, as newts live in swamps."

Again he remarked.

"Poverty is not economic; it's hereditary. To allow these people to breed and then attempt to cure them is like killing one mosquito at a time and allowing your drains to stand open."

Babies and children in the thoroughfare presently became so numerous that further progress in the automobile grew dangerous. The motorists got out and walked along the crowded thoroughfare, keeping their clothes away from the touch of the children as if they were some sort of little unclean animals. The air was filled with the shouts and wails of these filthy slum children. As the party picked its way through this whirlpool of life, Mrs. Harran plucked at Dr. Strachan's coat and pointed over the rabble of children across the street.

Page could not hear what she said but he followed her gesture and saw a heavy-bodied man in a brown saggy suit standing on the opposite pavement. A little pool of quiet surrounded this figure. Some children had collected around him and were watching him intently as he stood beside a man who was seated on a curbstone. This man seemed to be a beggar. One of his legs was bandaged, and Page saw the fellow take these bandages off, evidently with the intention of exhibiting some sore or wound to the heavy man.

At that moment Meachem called in Page's ear—

"That's Hevesh."

"Oh, I see."

Page regarded the heavy man curiously.

"You remember the fellow who was warned for practising medicine without a license."

"I saw it in the papers."

"No telling how much that charlatan bleeds out of this ignorant neighborhood. He's very popular down here."

Strachan crossed the street toward the healer, picking his way among the children with the characteristic quickness of the man. His party followed.

The beggar removed the wrappings from an old sore on his shin. Page watched curiously and a little squeamishly as the man Hevesh reached down and rubbed the suppurating place.

These manipulations seemed to fill the president of the Board of Health with a fine irony, as no doubt they did. The surgeon walked up to the healer's back. The beggar looked at the well dressed physician with the indifference of his kind.

"Is this man your doctor?" inquired the surgeon.

A certain stress on the word "doctor" probably put the beggar on his guard.

"I'm his patient, all right."

Page interrupted with frank curiosity—

"Do you really think he does you any good?"

Being addressed as one man to another, the beggar looked down at his sore leg.

"Mister, I just don't know. It feels better when he rubs it."

The president of the Board of Health was quite out of patience.

"That's psychological!" he ejaculated.

The man, Hevesh, spoke with his back to his hearers.

"Perhaps the sore is psychological, brother."

"A psychological sore!" snapped Strachan. "Don't you see it there solidly set in this dupe's leg. It's the result of a germ, some very real germ reproducing itself over and over millions of times!"

The healer stood up and turned slowly on the group behind him. He had a broad, brown, impassive face.

"Germs are everywhere, brother," he said without any argumentation in his voice. "They are as pervading as the will of God."

Strachan picked him up quickly.

"Then you, as a faith healer, do believe there are such things as germs?"

"My hands must be covered with them at this moment, brother."

Strachan gave one of his quick, sarcastic laughs.

"Don't you see that admission destroys your whole medical practise."

"I shall not contract this man's sore."

"Your resistance is stronger than his."

"Or my sympathy."

"What has sympathy got to do with it?"

"Did you ever touch some wild animal without fear and with sympathy, brother?"

Dr. Strachan drew his simian face to one side as he foreshadowed the healer's argument. The healer continued—

"It didn't rend or bite you?"

"How are you going to apply that to disease germs?" asked the doctor quizzically.

"They are a simple form of life but amenable to the influences which obtain over all life. So perhaps the sore is psychological as you suggest."

The surgeon stared at the fellow and then began an incredulous laughter.

"Meachem, Page, do you hear that? This fellow makes friends with the microbes!"

The very lunacy of the notion set the little group of the well-to-do into an amazed laughter as they stood in the squalor of the street.

The mendicant began rebinding the rags on his leg. Then he drew out of his torn clothes a piece of silver and handed it in silence to the healer. Hevesh took it, turned from the profound mockery of the slumming group as if he did not hear their laughter and disappeared in one of the tall tenement houses.

The surgeon seized on this detail with monkeylike quickness.

"So you paid him for this medical practise?" he inquired of the beggar.

The fellow looked at the surgeon.

"I gave him that."

"He charged you a fee, didn't he?"

"He never charges. If you give him anything he accepts and yet, do you know, sir?" added the mendicant oddly, "at times I have a feeling that it is somehow charity in him to take my money, as if he were doing something or other for me—I, who am always begging myself—though I can't quite seem to say, sir, what it is."

The president of the Board of Health shrugged at this absurdity and turned from the beggar with the unconcerned bruskness of any well bred man from an inferior. He wheeled in his dynamic way to his companions.

"We must report this to the police court."

"What?" inquired Page in surprize.

"Hevesh taking a fee for his practise. He is on probation, you know."

"But was he taking a fee? The beggar declares it was a gift."

"An evasion, no doubt. It's for the courts to decide. And then what he said about making friends with germs. Queer thing for a sane man to say. Anyway, we did see him take money!"

The four gentlefolk glanced up and down the dirty street, looking for the nearest police station in order that they might perform their duties as citizens and report a violation of the law.

Mr. Lawrence Page himself was a little surprized at this brusque resolution of Strachan's. As a Southerner Page felt the law should have a certain stretch and give in it. It should be used in emergencies, like a pill or a pistol, but Strachan, who perhaps had a streak of Russian Jew in him, felt the law should be a continuously applied force.

THE Southerner had no stomach to set off hunting a police station because a rather fantastic old man had accepted a few cents for rubbing another man's leg. And besides that, a queer fancy invaded the Virginian's brain. He had somewhere in his heart a residual emotion toward the accepted tenets of religion, and he began to wonder just how Christ performed His miracles of healing.

He had never in his life thought of it before, but there must have been some sort of spiritual mechanics to His deeds. And now did Christ make friends with the germs in a running sore, or did He slay them? As he mused over this fantastic speculation, his friends set out to find the police station.

Page did not go, but stood looking after them with that faint feeling of treachery which fills a man when he wilfully allows himself to fall behind his party. A touch of spiritual cowardice caused him to take a few lagging steps in their direction; then he stopped completely, turned and looked at the tenement in which Hevesh disappeared.

It was one of those enormously tall houses with its tiers of windows stacking upward to the sky. These windows had the heads and torsos of women and men leaning out of them for the air. These denizens, propped on their elbows, stared down fixedly into the street below. In the very high windows these projecting heads became mere blobs without detail, which borrowed the features of humanity by aid of a kind of spiritual perspective.

It was as if the squirm of life had been heaped up on both sides of the street to a prodigious height. The numberless heads stared down impassive in the vertical upward plunge of the façade.

The house number of this skyscraper of poverty was 213 Water Street.

As Page considered the scene, this particular number set up some faint claim to his attention. He read it again and remained looking at it, repeating the numerals in that delicate effort to fish up out of his thoughts some mental association connected with 213 Water Street.

In his head he could feel that odd sensation as if vague shadowy impressions were being gently moved behind the clear-cut proscenium of his conscious mind. Queer irrelevances slipped into and out of his attention, as if they were actors who had received a false call and showed themselves on the stage for a moment only to be hustled off in disgrace.

Then, quite abruptly, he recalled a poorly clad, warmly built girl piloting a blind man along Rush Boulevard. She was Vita Orloff and her address, 213 Water Street.

It did not occur to Page that he himself had worked a miracle a great deal more mysterious than healing in remembering the girl when he saw her address. The strange manner in which he came by his information was lost in the odd effect it had upon him.

A faint nervous reaction set up in his diaphragm. Page thought it was curiosity. He thought he would like to see Vira Orloff again. He recalled her vividly now; the wind blowing her dress closely about her body and legs, and the stupid kindliness in her face and bearing toward the blind man. He remembered her mute, animal-like distress when the old man had been taken from her by the guard—and the old colonel really had gone to his death.

In a very queer mood, indeed, was Page as he looked at the figures carved on the lintel, and as his legs moved him slowly into the doorway of No. 213 Water Street.

If the truth be told, the façade of the towering tenement was much along the same lines as those of the better apartment houses out toward University Place and on the Gold Coast. The doorway of the building was formed of deeply recessed marble arches. Marble panels led back to the elevators.

But the entry was filled with a pervasive and extraordinary filth. Dirt crusted the floor and filled the corners to the height of three or four inches. Spots of expectoration covered the floor and indecent sentences were scribbled on the dirty marble walls as if a filth spiritual as well as physical infected the building.

Two women and a man waited with Page for the descent of the lift. Page looked at these inmates; persons who had taken a decent house, and who, apparently, out of purpose, had defiled it; as if they had an appetency for such obscene surroundings. He looked at the man and the two women; persons who liked dirt; who deliberately gathered uncleaness around them.

The elevator rattled down in its shaft, the door opened, the four passengers stepped into the cage.

As the cage started grinding upward Page suddenly realized that he had as little chance of finding Vita Orloff in the huge tenement house as if she had been lost in a strange village. He turned to the elevator man, a humpbacked satyr, and asked if he knew Miss Orloff's room number.

The single question set the hunchback off into an interminable grumbling. He wasn't hired to keep fifty-two hundred tenants in his head; he didn't see why everybody in Chicago came worrying him; he didn't know anybody in the building; he spoke to nobody; nobody spoke to him; he ran the elevator.

These sullen stewings eventually subsided. He reminded Page of the Old Faithful geyser in the Yellowstone

The Southerner turned to one of the women in the cage.

"I think an old man who roomed near her died in the hospital today," he ventured.

The woman looked at him with suspicious eyes.

"Are you one of them clinic men?"

"No, I am a friend of Miss Orloff and of the old gentleman who died. I—wanted to —to extend my sympathy."

"I think they're on the twelfth floor," said the woman.

"Let me out on the twelfth," directed Page.

"We've passed the twel't" growled the hunchback. "Why people don't know where they want to get off— "

WHEN Page stepped off on the twelfth floor he found himself in a dimly lighted corridor which stretched before him without end. He moved off aimlessly; turned off another corridor at right angles with the first; peered down its dim length; started on again and presently was touched by a queer tremor of anxiety lest at that very moment he might be passing the room he was seeking.

He walked on and on, turning corners, until finally he caught himself up and realized how irrational was his quest.

There was no way to find Vita Orloff. Why should he find her? There was nothing he could do or say to her. She was a woman who stood quite outside his social contacts. He decided to give up his search. He turned about and began looking for the corridor signs which directed him back to the elevator.

As he moved off on this new mission he heard somewhere a door open and the sound of a woman's voice. The unseen door closed again and there was silence. At the sound a queer tremulousness seized Page. He turned in the direction of the noise and presently saw entering the corridor the heavy form of the man, Hevesh, whom Meachem had pointed out on the street below. In sudden relief Page turned to the broad-faced fellow.

"Do you know where Vita Orloff's room is?" he asked.

The man Hevesh looked at Page with an impassive face.

"Yes, I know."

"Would you show me?" inquired the Virginian with some misgiving, "I—I wanted to ask about the death of her friend."

Page somehow expected to be refused, but the heavy man motioned Page to fall in with him and the two proceeded slowly along the corridor. As they went along Hevesh observed in an ordinary tone—

"I didn't ask you why you wanted to see the woman called Vita Orloff."

"A friend of hers died," repeated Page, a little disconcerted.

"Do you think that is why you came wandering like this through the corridors—because a friend of hers died?"

"No-o," admitted Page, moved again by the feeling of obscurity of his own motives, "I don't suppose it was that." He pondered a moment and added simply, "No, it wasn't that. I don't know why I came up here. I was wondering myself a moment ago."

"It's an odd place for a man like you to come."

"It's an odd place for any one to come," said Page. "Such air, such dirt— "

He glanced about him.

"The stench and filth were not here until the people came and brought them," said Hevesh.

"That was exactly what I was thinking as I entered the tenement," ejaculated Page in faint surprize. "I had a queer impression that these people came into this building and deliberately defiled it; that somehow or other this was their— their habitat. I'm afraid I'm not making myself clear."

The Virginian was a little befogged in his own idea.

"Perhaps the souls who enter these tenement buildings are not far advanced," suggested the healer simply. "They are nearer the animals. That is why there are such swarms of children in the street, such swarms in the houses. They are flowing up out of the endless world of animals."

The Virginian drew in a little breath of amazement at such an eerie suggestion. Now that Hevesh mentioned it there was something bestial in the tenement house;

the corridors were runways, the rooms dens; the whole place smelled of unwashed bodies, as clear-cut an animal smell as one would find at the monkey house at the zoo. Still, of course, the notion was absurd; no educated man would dream of believing that—well, for instance, that the Chicago slaughter houses increased the population in the tenement district. The Virginian smiled faintly at his own whimsy.

The healer had walked on without any argument about the matter and presently paused and knocked at one of the doors. It opened a little way and the girl, Vita Orloff, peered out through the crack. When she saw who it was, she silently opened the door and admitted the men. She was in tenement dishabille, a single soiled gown which she kept clutched together at the bosom. A window from an airshaft opened into her room and a constant play of warmish pumped air circulated through it.

"I came to ask you to stay with the Bebb baby tonight, Vita," said Hevesh, looking at the girl. "Its mother has to go to the Gas Building tonight."

"To scrub?"

"Yes."

The girl's bosom lifted with a sudden breath of pain.

"I can't go, father, I can't wait on the baby. I don't want ever to help any one else, to be kind to another human being. I was just sitting here thinking to myself, 'Now that he is gone I am free!' A woman somehow can't be free if she loves or helps anybody at all. I would think at the dances, 'I might easily do that if I didn't have to go back to the colonel.' So now I was just sitting here in my room thinking, 'He's gone—the colonel's gone, and now I can be—' "

She paused in her monolog and seemed to listen intently. Then she took a few steps and moved aside some ragged portières which draped a little alcove in her room. This exposed an old bed, still unmade. She stared at this with a queer expression on her face.

"I thought I heard him move."

She moistened her lips with her tongue.

"So help me God, I thought I heard the colonel move on his bed!"

The implications in Vita's monolog somehow brought Page a queer touch of disappointment in the girl. As to her fantasy, he said to her simply—

"You imagined it."

"Col. Morgan had a deep affection for this girl," observed the healer.

"Yes, I know." The Virginian looked at the heavy man queerly.

"But Col. Morgan is dead."

The man, Hevesh, sighed, then struck off in odd disconnection.

"My brother, doesn't it seem remarkable that you entered this building at precisely this crisis in Vita Orloff's life, that you got up to this floor, wandered exactly to the right corridor to find me, and at once ask me to show you to Miss Orloff's room? Doesn't that seem singular to you?"

"What has that to do with Col. Morgan's death?"

"Doesn't it suggest some force moved you to come here and dissuade Vita Orloff from this rash step she contemplates."

Page shook his head.

"Col. Morgan is dead. I think it was mere 'happen-so.' If I had stepped into any other room in the building I could probably have been of some service in some way; that, too, would have fitted in with some supernatural theory. Every event must terminate somehow, and then when one looks back from the termination the event seems planned, although it is the result of sheer fortuity. No, the only connection my being here has to do with Col. Morgan's death. I came to offer my sympathy to Miss Orloff."

All this Page reeled off with a certain seasoned facility because he had been taught very carefully both in school and college that every result is the product of its causes—its physical ponderable causes. Even psychology was taught to him in this mode. It was the American attitude which was based on matter, material things, which built skyscrapers, motor cars, radios, airships and submarines.

Not to reduce every effect to some solid physical cause would in a way be treachery to the cult of skyscrapers and radios and submarines; it would be treason to America. So now Page was faintly amused that Hevesh should attempt to inject a touch of the supernatural into so simple an affair as his appearing in Vita Orloff's room. It was a quackish thing to do.

Hevesh himself argued no further about the matter, but turned to Vita.

"The Bebb baby is very ill. Can't you take care of it after twelve o'clock tonight?"

The girl, who evidently had not followed a word the two men were saying, came out of her reverie and answered in moody ungraciousness—

"Why doesn't she put the baby in a hospital?"

"Did you want Col. Morgan to go to the hospital?"

"Then let her tend her own baby?"

"She has been sitting up with it till twelve every night when she must go to the Gas Building to scrub."

The girl drew a short, painful breath.

"No I won't," she decided. "From now on, I'll—I'll do as I like!"

As Page looked at Vita, seated sullenly on her couch, a certain pity for the girl quivered through him. Her threats were pitiful. It was pitiful that the promises of her warmly molded body should be flung to the chance embraces of the boulevard and the dance halls. He drew in a breath to speak to her, to try to show her the folly of her insurrection, but something about the girl caused him to give over his design; a certain mute and voiceless something behind her insubordinate curves of flesh.

He felt instinctively that mere reason would never move Vita to any degree whatever; but a sudden idea came to him if he should offer to go himself and sit with the Bebb child it might touch the girl—a sacrifice to touch the unreasonable, the brutish beings newly arrived in human bodies.

"Which explains Christ," murmured Hevesh in a low tone.

The aptness of the interpolation covered the oddness of it.

"A bid for a certain type of mind, like the drums of the Salvation Army," suggested Page, then he looked at the healer queerly.

"A telepathist," he thought, converting it into the idiom of psychology and thereby denuding it of the unusual or the impressive.

"At any rate, I'll go," he added aloud. "What is there to do to a baby?"

"You put cold cloths on its spine."

"For how long?"

"Till the mother returns from the Gas Building at six o'clock in the morning."

"Very well, I don't mind taking a turn—hope it works, she—I'd hate to see her—anyway I'll do it."

And immediately Page's thoughts crinkled into a certain humor which his serious face did not express at all. He thought what a droll thing it was for him, a Virginian gentleman, to set up as a volunteer nurse for a sick baby in a Chicago tenement.

"After all," interrupted Hevesh, "you must have come along the same path once yourself, brother."

Page was growing accustomed to these interpolations.

"Hardly, you see I came from quite a different social milieu."

The healer pondered a moment.

"Still, a moment ago, you started to warn this girl."

"Ye-es," agreed Page, wondering whither this tended, "yes, a moment ago I was on the verge of trying to warn her."

The Orloff girl looked at Page with widened eyes.

"Warn me, Mr. Page—of what?"

"Well—of a certain callousness in one's givings."

The girl remained staring mutely at the Virginian.

"Why did you want to warn her?" asked the healer in a gentle tone.

"Such a thing as that is particularly bad for a woman."

"Why do you think so."

"Well—I've observed it."

The broad, impassive face of Hevesh was touched with a faint smile for the first time.

"But you were not thinking of your observations when you almost spoke to this girl; you were thinking of something you seemed to have felt somewhere at some time, a kind of personal horror of prostitution."

"Imagination," said Page.

"Not experience?"

"No—a racial memory."

Page used glibly this phrase whose implications no mortal man can conceive.

Mr. Hevesh smiled again, gently.

AT EXACTLY twelve o'clock that night Mrs. Jane Bebb, of 213 Water Street, gathered up her knee pads and bristle brushes, then glanced at the gentleman who had come so queerly to attend her baby.

"You are sure you are not from the clinic, sir?" she questioned apprehensively.

"Mr. Hevesh sent me."

"Not a gentleman the likes of you, sir?"

"Yes, he first asked Miss Orloff to come and then I volunteered."

"Then you are not from the clinic. The clinic and the father don't have much to do with each other; and I'm sure I'm obliged to a gentleman like you."

Mrs. Bebb picked up her instruments for scrubbing, about to set forth upon her sacerdotal task of purifying the altar of one of Chicago's greatest gods, the Gas Building in the Pantheon of the Loop. She searched her worn handbag for the pass card which admitted her at night into the single elevator in the upward abyss of the great shrine to Gas. She found it and then pointed at a glass and a bottle of brown medicine on a table in the corner of the room.

"That's the medicine not to give," she cautioned.

"Not to give!" repeated Page.

"Yes, it's the medicine left by the clinic doctor. You just wet the sponge with that holy water left in the basin there by Father Hevesh and bathe its back."

Page gave a twitch of internal mirth as Mrs. Bebb pointed at a cracked basin.

"I'll be careful not to mix the two cures."

He glanced around the room for a chair with the circumspection of a gentleman in a hovel.

"Just bathe my poor little love every fifteen minutes, though a gentleman like you to be doing such a thing—" Mrs. Bebb blinked her reddened eyes, gripped her knee pads—"though I thank you from the depths of my heart, I'm sure."

She bundled off down the corridor, a purgator of the high altar to Gas.

Mr. Page selected the least greasy of the Bebb chairs, spread his handkerchief on it and sat down. He drew out and glanced at his watch.

The Bebb baby lay in the center of a ragged bed, a tiny shred of humanity without movement and without sound. As Page looked at it he had a bachelorish feeling that it was a very well mannered infant; then his thoughts flowed immediately to Vita Orloff.

In reality Page had entered upon this quixotic vigil as a kind of vague knight-errant gesture to protect something in Vita Orloff, which his present musings assured him must long since have vanished. A faint, amused bitterness flavored his thoughts, which now took quite a different tone from those which moved him when the man, Hevesh, was present. He continued thinking of Vita in this new and somehow exciting tenor. He wondered if she were still sitting on her lounge with her thoughts still moved by that sullen dawning liberty of the flesh.

The thought of Vita sitting thus somehow clung to Page's mind. He became vividly aware that to reach her he need only step outside the Bebb door, walk a little way up the corridor, then six doors up another, and he would be at her door. He wondered again if she were still there.

The man stirred himself nervously and looked at the baby on the bed. Then he stepped over to the basin of what Mrs. Bebb called "holy water." A dirty sponge lay in the bowl. Page moistened it and approached the frail little creature.

When he stooped over it, the Virginian saw with a kind of shock that the little cripple lay with its eyes open staring fixedly at the ceiling. It seemed ages old. It gave Page an impression of something peering out of a remote and incalculable past. The hollow, wizened little face stared out of whatever life it had once known into this fantastic tenement world it had entered.

With a little shudder the Virginian deserted his fantasy. He put out his hands gently and lifted the crooked little body and applied the moistened sponge to its emaciated miniature frame.

As he did so he thought of Strachan's invective against the tenement dwellers for using Hevesh's remedies instead of the clinic's. And he mused with a certain spice of self-reproach that he was following the tenement custom. He glanced at the bottle of liquid left on the table by the clinic doctor and was moved by an impulse to read the directions and administer the proper medicine.

He walked over to the vial and picked it up. It came from the City Dispensary and the label held the physician's signature, Dr. Nathan O. Person. The fingers with which he picked up the spoon trembled a little. He started to pour out the indicated dose when there came a faint tap on the door.

Page put the bottle down with a curious qualm as if he had been caught in some guilty act. He walked across and opened the door.

For several seconds he stood staring at the girl in her flimsy tenement dress and then uttered in surprize—

"Vita—why did you come here!"

"About the baby," hurried the girl in the same low tone.

"I kept sitting there thinking of a gentleman like you tending the baby—"

As the girl remained outside the dirty threshold, Page drew her in. The girl came inside and closed the door after her.

A sudden tongue-tiedness seized Page now that the real object of his thoughts had entered the room. He felt a necessity to say something, but the girl so stirred him that he could think of nothing at all. He silently handed her the cleanest chair, on which he had been sitting. The girl looked at him, smiled faintly and first found her tongue.

"I suppose Mrs. Bebb said when to give the medicine. Is it time?"

She looked at a little alarm clock on a shelf.

"I have just given it—no, I started to give it—" he forgot which he had done—"there are two medicines, I think—"

Here his emotions flung aside the topic of the medicine and left him in painful inconclusion.

"Which did you give?" asked Vita.

"The water. I sponged its back."

"You did?" Then the girl evidently got to the topic near her own heart, for she said simply:

"I came to help you—you reminded me of him."

"The colonel?"

"Yes, you talk like him."

The Roumanian girl looked at Page with warm black eyes.

"He said 'saouth' like that, too; sa-outh, sa-outh." She tried wistfully to reproduce the vanished drawl of the dead inventor. "I used to lie in bed and look at him in the alcove and wonder what he was like when he was young. He was very good to me. He always called me, Miss Orloff."

Vita's full lips trembled and tears came into her eyes.

"He was a gentleman," said Page, still speaking beside the real body of his feelings which throbbed in his veins and filled him with brief tremblings.

At the word "gentleman" the Virginian made an effort to collect himself.

The girl paused, seemed to stare into space for a moment, then gave a sigh which moved her heavy bosom and became silent again.

Page arose sharply. He uttered the girl's name in a strained tone. Vita looked up at him with a little intake of breath when at that moment from the bed came a queer, threadlike cry. The man stopped; the girl got up with the abruptness of strong, stocky folk.

"The poor little thing," she cooed. "I believe you said you never did give it its medicine."

She went over quickly to the bed, stooped and took the baby in her strong feminine arms. It was barely a handful. Vita placed the fragile little thing in the deep hollow of her breast as if she would fill it with her abounding strength.

"Get the medicine," she directed.

Page took up the bottle and came with it. The sight of the child's little head indenting the girl's soft bosom caused his hand to shake and spill some of the liquid. Presently he presented a dose to the tiny puckered mouth. To steady themselves, the man and the girl leaned together.

The tiny invalid made wry lips at the dose. Vita leaned to replace it in its bed. Page's heart was beating. He breathed in short breaths. His free hand pressed the girl's arm unsteadily, slipped around her. The girl gasped weakly as there rushed upon both of them that strange and awful moment when a man and a woman cease to be strangers, cease even to be quite separate individuals, when they merge and blend.

Page looked down on the broad, kindly face which was about to enter and become part of his life. He could not divine what manner of part she would play. He did not know.

Then they were stopped by the sound of footsteps coming through the corridor. They stood in this beginning embrace when the steps paused at the Bebb door. As the bolt turned the lovers looked at each other with faint, questioning smiles and stepped a little apart.

The door was opened by the man, Hevesh, and another girl followed him into the room. When he saw Vita he said:

"Oh, you did come, Vita. I had got Miss Noorian to relieve Mr. Page."

The Roumanian girl turned to the bed to conceal her agitated breathing.

"Yes, we were just going to give it its medicine—"

She broke off with a gasp, reached a thick finger and touched the tiny human atom on the coverlet. She turned to Page, her face distorted by an emotional spasm.

"Oh! Oh!" she wailed. "The baby's dead!"

And she began to weep as if her heart were broken.

IV

IN HIS suite of rooms at the Hotel Majestic, Page spent the remainder of the night with the mystery and shock of the Bebb baby's death and his anxiety about the girl Vita Orloff nibbling at his brain like rats. With the morning he tried to shake off his depression. He told himself that the whole sinister atmosphere had been built upon nothing more formidable than a coincidence in the names of two doctors.

A surgeon, Dr. Nathan O. Person, had performed an unsuccessful operation upon Colonel Morgan, and a child specialist of the same name had prescribed for a baby who had died. Upon this slight foundation, Page assured himself, his own imagination had built the whole macabre situation in the Water Street tenement.

This was a likely enough theory and to verify it, Page picked out volume "P" of the Chicago city directory which nested in the table under the desk telephone in his room. He ran through it and to his surprize did not find a single entry under the name of "Person." The plural form of this name occupied a column and a half but even there the Virginian found no Dr. Nathan O.

He closed the book and pondered the matter. Was it possible that both of these doctors were such prominent specialists that they found it convenient to keep their names out of the public directory? This was so improbable that Page discarded the theory and there came upon him a renewed feeling of some mystery underlying both of the tragedies.

Queerly enough, the menace of this mystery seemed somehow to link itself about the girl, Vita Orloff. Half a dozen times during the morning an anxiety for the Roumanian girl came into his thoughts. Why he had these fears, how the deaths of two invalids could threaten Vita Orloff's superlative strength, Page did not know. Yet the two ideas were like the halves of a whole. Any thought of the tragedies brought up a feeling that the Roumanian girl was in some grave insecurity.

So persistent became the idea that finally the Virginian decided he would go down to the Water Street district and—here his plans came to a blank pause. He did not know what he meant to do when he reached Water Street. He did not know what he meant to say to the girl when he saw her. He had a shaken feeling that he would make some impulsive move. He wished he could get her out of the tenements—

His telephone bell tinkled.

Page reached for it with a defensive feeling that he would not be drawn back this morning into the politer circles of his Chicago acquaintance.

"Well, what is it?"

The voice of the clerk in the office below answered—

"A young lady to see you, sir."

Page had a feeling as if the Roumanian girl had stepped out of his thoughts into his actual presence. He leaned forward in relief and hunched over the telephone.

"Very good, very good, you may—"

He had started to say "send her up," then re-collected himself. Still their beginning romance of the night before reasserted itself in his veins. He suddenly realized that his whole nervousness about the Roumanian girl was but nervousness from that uncompleted embrace.

With all his heart Page wanted her to come up to his rooms. He meant no undue liberty toward her. He most probably would have treated her with the most careful propriety but he did wish she would come up to his—

In the receiver he said—

"I'll be right down."

"You'll find her in Parlor A-7, sir."

"Yes, thank you."

Parlor A-7, that was something; but he wished she could have come to his rooms.

Page got up quickly from the table, looked into a mirror, made little adjustments of his scarf, then suddenly in the eager stretch of his thoughts toward the girl he found space to wonder why she had come. He did not press the point because he did not care. He hurried out of his room to an elevator and presently glided down a score of floors and found a bell boy who directed him to Parlor A-7.

As Page followed the uniform along bottomless carpets he had that alert peering feeling as if trying to see around corners for a first glimpse of the girl who had so moved him the night before. He was afraid she would appear sadly different with her cheap clothes in the parlor of the Hotel Majestic. He nerved himself to be just, generous toward her.

The bell boy opened a door, stood aside and barely held out a palm. Page put a coin in it and stepped inside. The next moment he was halted by a queer surprize. A slight blond girl sat in a big leather rocker with one foot curled up under her.

"Why, Millie Harran!" he ejaculated in slow bewilderment, and then with a little more courtesy, "how nice of you to come to see me!"

Millie did not return Page's mechanical smile. Her face was grave, almost frightened, as she arose and gave the Virginian her hands.

"I suppose you think my visit rather odd." She glanced briefly at her host and then let her eyes rest on a red faience vase which doubled itself in a black lacquer table.

"Oh, no, not at all," assured the man, marveling at what could have brought her to his hotel. "Let's sit down."

As they moved to a couch, Millie fished nervously in her hand-bag and brought out a little bundle of papers and cards caught together with a rubber.

"I—I don't hardly know how to begin," she admitted nervously, "I suppose this one will do—"

She fished a short piece of newspaper galley-proof out of her packet and handed it to Page, then watched her host intently as he read the following editorial:

> TWO FRONTS
>
> The columns of the *Tribune* during the last three days have recorded the deaths of Conrad Reid, Ammerson Smith, Colonel Thomas Morgan, baby Violet Bebb, Larry Mills, Peter Simler and some half dozen others.
>
> In speaking of these deaths, Dr. Nathan O. Person, the attending physician, said:
>
> "Reid and Smith were victims of incurable diseases. Morgan was blind and helpless. The Bebb baby and little Larry Mills were incurable cripples. Peter Simler was an imbecile and could never have become a normal member of society. Who can say that these men and the parents of these children, by refusing to transmit their diseases or to burden society with their parasitic and unproductive existences, have not sacrificed their lives as nobly in guarding America's mental, physical and economic front as did the heroes of Château Thierry in defending her national existence?

In this article the name Dr. Nathan O. Person stood out in rubric to Page. He turned to the girl.

"Where did you get this, Millie?"

Miss Harran pinkened faintly.

"On Mr. Meachem's desk."

"Oh, he wrote it—the proof came back to him?"

"Yes, he wrote it."

"Does he know this Dr. Nathan O. Person?"

"No, he doesn't. When I found this on his desk I telephoned to him and asked him. He said he didn't. That's why I came to you."

"To ask me if I know him?"

"Yes, do you, or won't you find out something about him for me? His name is not in the telephone directory."

The girl looked so frightened and bewildered that Page was sorry for her.

"But, Millie, what set you off on a search like this?"

For answer she searched her packet again and produced a simple yellow card such as Page had seen in the possession of old Col. Morgan. It said:

> Admit bearer, Mr. Harvey Leonard Meachem, to the clinic of Dr. Nathan O. Person at No. 14 Rush Street. Hour by appointment.

Page straightened and looked at the delicate girl with widened eyes.

"Meachem!"

Millie began to weep.

"Yes, and I remembered what you had told us at dinner about the old man and the girl, and then I read this editorial about how—" the girl's voice sank to a whisper—"how many he had killed—"

"But, my heavens, Millie, he doesn't *kill* his patients. These are just the unfortunate ones." Page tapped the editorial. "These are the ones picked out to illustrate a point editorially, don't you see. I fancy he cures hundreds, naturally he does cure hundreds, a prominent physician like him."

"Yes," breathed the girl, staring at her companion, "but did you ever before hear of a doctor publishing in the paper a list of the patients he had lost and—and—what a good thing it was?"

"That is rather unprecedented," admitted the Virginian.

"No doctor I ever heard of would do such a thing!"

Page was finding it hard to soothe the girl, especially against the background of his own suspicions.

"Well—a very prominent specialist, you know—"

"No, I don't know. And I don't want

Mr. Meachem to go to this Dr. Person, and especially to such a ghastly place as you described on Rush Street."

"Why, you don't suppose he will!" ejaculated Page. "To a doctor he himself doesn't know!"

"That's exactly what I asked him and he didn't say he wouldn't."

"What's wrong with Meachem, anyway? He looks all right to me, a little worn and pale perhaps."

"He went to take a physical examination," explained Millie in a low tone, "and you know the doctors always find something awful the matter with anybody who is dumb enough to go get a physical examination made of themselves."

"For life insurance?"

"N—no," said the girl in a still lower tone.

"Then where—I don't see—"

The girl grew very pink.

"Before the—the eugenics commission."

Page opened his eyes with a glimpse of comprehension.

"You mean—to get a marriage license?"

A shudder ran through Millie. She leaned over on the back of the couch and began to weep.

Pity and amazement touched Page. He leaned over beside the unhappy girl and stroked her hand.

"Why, Millie, little Millie, you don't mean that you and—Harvey Meachem—"

The girl nodded amidst her sobbing and finally gasped out—

"Ever since I—was a little girl. He would have headaches—terrible ones. I would put ice-cloths on his head."

Such a delicate lavender romance, such a connotation of a little girl's pity growing into a young woman's love moved Page to a keen sympathy. He put an arm about her protectively and lifted her to her feet.

"We'll make an end of this, Millie. We'll go see Meachem and get something definite on the point, and we'll simply bar this Dr. Person. Don't like him myself. May be prejudice—guess it is—but I don't like him. So we'll go around and stop this right now."

Millie blinked her eyes gratefully at her friend.

"I knew you would help me."

"Certainly will. We'll run up to the *Tribune* office right now."

The two turned out of the parlor together. As they walked along the hushed carpet of the corridor, another query suddenly came to Page's mind.

"By the way, Millie," he asked very quietly, "did he pass?"

The girl gave a little shake of her head.

"Maybe this operation would make him acceptable to the eugenics requirements?"

Millie glanced at Page, then looked away and grew softly pink again.

MR. HARVEY MEACHEM, in the sixty-third story of the *Tribune* building, received his callers with some degree of surprize. He indicated chairs and immediately added, looking curiously at their faces:

"What's the excitement? Both of you seem wrought up over something."

Page was a little at loss how to begin.

"Millie asked me to come down here with her."

Meachem nodded.

"I see. Did you come downtown for some particular thing, Millie?"

"You mean the—the board?" queried the girl with her habitual flush.

"Yes."

"What's the use now?"

The editor drew a sigh and turned to his friend.

"Do you know what we are talking about, Page?"

"Millie said you two were thinking of marriage."

"Yes, but it seems we won't be allowed to. I didn't pass the physical tests."

Meachem got up from his seat and began a nervous pacing back and forth near his favorite window.

"You know that's a strange criterion for marriage, Page—physical tests. The 'I' in us seems to have so little to do with the physical. The X-ray shows I have a tumor, the beginning of something on my spleen. Well, suppose I have. What has that to do with me. If my whole body sloughed away bit by bit, I'd still be Harvey Meachem as long as life lingered in me. For the eugenics board to deny this personal 'me' the right to reproduce itself merely because of a bit of faulty equipment, it's *non sequitur*, Page."

"It seems to me," flung out Millie, "that's all the eugenics board is looking out for, the equipment, to be efficient. It doesn't care a snap about the 'us', what kind of people we really are."

Meachem shook his head and stared out the window.

"It's impossible for modern conversation to avoid the old folk connotations of an astral something in us which is 'us', and yet scientifically there is no such division. I'm of a piece—spleen, lungs, brain. A fault with any part is a fault with the whole."

"That isn't what we came to see you about," interrupted the Virginian uneasily.

"No? What was it?"

"Of course you know more about these things than we do, but Millie found a card in your room admitting you to the clinic of Dr. Nathan O. Person."

Meachem became grave.

"I didn't mean to leave that around loose, I'm very careless."

"Well, we have come to ask you not to go."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you," exclaimed Page. "Because there is something queer about this Doctor Person. In the first place, his operations seem to be uniformly unsuccessful."

"He is on the free city clinic and accepts patients *in extremis*," reasoned Page.

"And then he has no telephone number. Both Millie and I have tried to look him up in the directory."

"A blind number, no doubt," suggested Meachem, "known to his friends and patients. He has an office on Rush Street."

"But look here," pressed the Virginian seriously, "what do you really know about this Doctor Person anyway? Did you ever see him?"

To Page's surprize the editor broke into a mirthless laugh.

"Frankly I never did."

"Any of your friends know him?"

Meachem continued his vaguely amused expression.

"I don't believe so."

"Are you thinking about going to him?"

"He has been recommended to me."

"By whom?"

"By doctors I do know—and have confidence in."

"Then these friends of yours did know him."

"Possibly," agreed Meachem with a return of his faint quizzical expression, "but I think they know him more by reputation than by personal contact."

"I never heard of a physician about whom so much mystery hung," declared Page, "and, my lord, his operating room on Rush Street suggests it. I've been there. It's the gloomiest, most godforsaken building—"

"He's probably an eccentric; you know sometimes men of exceptional ability—"

"Now, look here Meachem," cried Page, "are you going to that man or are you not? Millie and I are worried. There must be other surgeons in town just as good as this Person man—"

"Oh, but not in his line. He is absolutely preeminent in his particular line of surgery."

"Say," exclaimed the Virginian staring at the editor's strange expression, "is there anything *funny* in our questions to you? Does our anxiety, our suspense *amuse* you in some way?"

A sudden moisture came to the editor's eyes.

"Why not at all, not in the least, my dear, dear friends. I simply—"

At this point a buzzer on Meachem's desk interrupted the conversation. The editor picked up the receiver.

"This is Meachem, *Tribune* editorial offices—yes—yes—repeat that please— Oh, Hevesh—they've got him to rights this time. Well, I'm glad of it—yes, I'll comment on his unscientific stand—certainly, Doctor Strachan—" He put up his receiver and began making some notes on a pad and at the same time talking to Page and Millie.

"That fellow, Hevesh, you remember, Page—the tenement folk are raising a disturbance about him down on Water Street and that neighborhood."

"What's the trouble?"

"The police have jailed him for malpractise on a baby named Bebb. They charge him with having caused its death."

Page straightened abruptly.

"That's absolutely false."

"How do *you* know?"

"Because I was there when the Bebb baby died. In fact, I gave it its last dose of medicine. It was a prescription from your own surgeon, Meachem, Dr. Nathan O. Person."

"What!" cried Millie Harran, "you don't mean—"

She stopped aghast.

"I certainly do!" reiterated Page warmly. "And, Meachem, I want you to give that man up!"

"But, look here, if you know this Hevesh didn't cause that death, Page, you ought to go down there and testify in the case. It would be a rank injustice—"

"Well but what about this Doctor Person?"

Millie came to Page and took his arm.

"You go on down to Water Street and help that man Hevesh in his lawsuit," she suggested significantly, drawing him toward the door.

Page yielded and the two moved off together. As they opened the door into the corridor, Millie whispered:

"He knows everything about this Doctor Person. He's been making fun of us."

"I think so," agreed the Virginian uneasily. "I suppose this Person fellow must be all right."

"I think I can find out the truth by myself," said Millie with a faint flush.

"Here's luck to you," whispered Page as he waved a hand at an elevator which happened to have stopped on his floor.

V

WHEN Lawrence Page was alone in a taxicab on his way to the police station on Water Street, his thoughts subtly deserted his friends and their perplexities and turned to the girl, Vita Orloff. The Roumanian girl was not in trouble; he had no reason to center his thoughts on her except the best one in the world—he couldn't prevent it.

The Virginian had been thinking of Vita for several minutes before he realized this mental disloyalty to Millie and Meachem and also to Hevesh. He was surprized that he should abandon these friends with whom he had really important connection for the mere sensuous satisfaction of holding Vita Orloff's image before his eyes.

Then he realized that his quickness to be off to assist his friend, Hevesh, had been simply a mask flung up by his subconscious to make an excuse for a visit to the Roumanian girl's home. To this end he was enjoining his chauffeur to haste. It was amusing, it was depressing, the trickery of one's own mind to itself.

As he turned into Glancy Street, the everlasting swarms of children greeted his eyes, and the huge flat faces of the tenement buildings beflagged with the miserable laundry of the poor. Such squalor, such surroundings!

The thought that he, Lawrence Page, a gentleman of Richmond, Virginia, actually was seeking a woman amid such surroundings shamed Page. He thought of her class, his class, and then, somehow there drifted into Page's mind Hevesh's queer theory about souls; about a veritable stream of souls passing into and out of this state of things we call life. And still the mere passage of these astral forces—he allowed his fancy for the moment to assume there were such forces as Hevesh suggested—the passage of these astral forces was further complicated by the influence of heredity and environment and breeding.

Now that posed one of the queerest problems which had ever entered his mind. He wondered if love, if sudden attractions of certain women for certain men might not be induced by some spirit struggling toward flesh. He wondered if it were remotely possible that he and Vita Orloff were, one might say, a single vital machine being passionately assembled—what tenuous nonsense!

Yet if one dared admit the possibility of a soul even by the most guarded hypothesis, startling results followed. It explained everything; sudden loves; swarms of low-class children and the paucity of upper-class children; the almost unlimited reproduction of the lower forms of life—fewer and fewer and fewer as perfection was approached; children of light ripening through millenniums!

In the meantime the children along Glancy Street actually had stopped Page's motor, so the Virginian got out, paid off his meterage, intending to walk. As he did so he saw, but paid no attention to, a youngish man who came angling across the thoroughfare toward him. As a matter of fact, the Virginian was at that moment deciding what he should do: go to the police court and testify for Hevesh or walk on to the tenement house on Water Street and find Vita. He wanted to see her, to talk to her. He was just turning from the cab in the latter direction when the youngish man called to him—

"Pardon me, sir, but does this happen to be Mr. Lawrence Page, who left the *Tribune* building about half an hour ago?"

The questioner was a smallish man with a sharp countenance full of wrinkles such as dried-up young men develop early in life. The sharp, wrinkled face suggested acuteness, sophistication and a certain ironic amusement at life such as ail youngish men who are not doing particularly well in their professions.

"Yes, I'm Page," the Virginian acknowledged his identity, wondering a little.

In his turn the sharp-faced one stared blankly at the Southerner.

"The —— you say!"

Now, for a man to come up and recognize Page and in the same breath be amazed at his own recognition called for some explanation itself.

"Why the surprize?" smiled the Virginian.

"Were you coming to the Hevesh trial?" inquired the youngish man with a cross-questioning air.

"I had started there," admitted Page guardedly.

"But you were turning off, going somewhere else?" pressed Wrinkles acutely.

Page looked at him, growing more surprized.

"Frankly, I was."

The sophisticated stare went quite blank.

"Now what in the —— do you know about that!" he dragged out in the utmost amazement.

"Nothing," snapped Page. "Does this happen to be your idea of a joke, or are you a clairvoyant, or—"

The withered one made an apologetic gesture.

"Excuse my rudeness, but I am rather bowled over. Willett's my name. I cover the police courts. You happen to be wanted as a witness in the Hevesh case. Now, Mr. Meachem had just telephoned me from the office that you were coming down here. I told this in court and Judge Benson agreed to wait for you. But this fellow, Hevesh— By George, there is something woozy about the old quack—"

Willett got out cigarets and offered Page one. The Virginian took it.

"I always smoke when I'm up in the air," explained Willett in a muffled tone. "It helps focus the ideas, if any."

"I still don't see why you are confused," protested Page mildly as he accepted a burning match.

"It's a little thing in a way—" the reporter screwed his wrinkles into puzzlement—"and then in a way it isn't. The fall of an apple you know proved the law of gravitation."

"I had heard that rumor before," admitted Page patiently.

"Well, it was like this: When Judge Benson said he would wait, this Hevesh fellow spoke up and said you would come to the head of Glancy Street in a motor and there you would get out and go to some other place."

"Did he say where?" asked Page too quickly.

"No."

Thus relieved, Page found time to be amazed at the incident himself.

"You can't mean it!"

"He did, positively, and I walked up here mainly to call the old charlatan's hand. Then I thought if it did work out as the old chap said, I'd ask you to come on over to court, but I had no more idea that there was anything to it."

The cynical one made a gesture expressive of utter disbelief.

"Of course you hadn't," agreed Page, still marveling himself, and a little uneasy.

"How did he do it?"

"We-ell, he knew it would be crowded on Glancy Street. He figured I'd have to walk; then he knew—"

Here Page ceased talking and finished the sentence in his thoughts.

"I was interested in Vita Orloff."

Then it occurred to Page with what appositeness this man, Hevesh, had appeared in the corridor at 213 Water Street to direct him to Vita Orloff's room; and again at the door of the Bebb apartment at exactly the moment to interrupt his emotional scene with the Roumanian girl, and now he had sent a reporter to intercept a visit he was about to make her.

"I don't know how he does it," he said aloud to the reporter.

"But look here!" interposed Willett briskly. "That's not mere happen-so. There isn't one chance in a million that he would guess those details."

"He knew somehow," admitted Page.

"Funny to me the fellows who can pull that sort of stuff are always—well, sort of shady, you know, in bad."

"Christ himself was in bad all his life," returned Page.

"There's no getting around that," admitted the reporter. "I've thought of it a hundred times. If Christ should come back to earth, admitting there was such a person, why, gentlemen like us wouldn't associate with Him. They didn't when He was here. He ganged with fishermen and the *sans* *culotte* most of the time. The average good middle class man imagines if He should come back, he would fall on His neck and weep. Like —— he would. He would turn Him out of his grocery, or his law office, or studio." The reporter broke into laughter with down-curved lips.

The men walked on a little way.

"Has Hevesh any witnesses?" inquired Page.

"Clouds of them, but only one of them knew anything," laughed Willett. "Riff-raff, mainly, who swear that he has done them good. But this girl somehow stuck in my mind. I heard her name called—Orloff."

Page glanced quickly at his companion.

"Did Hevesh tell you to mention her to me?"

"Why should he?"

"Why should you have singled her out of a whole crowd of witnesses and remembered one particular name?"

The reporter scratched his head at some obscure motive.

"I don't know. She sort of caught my attention when I first went into the court-room; the way she looked; and the way she hung on this man Hevesh's actions and words. In fact, if it hadn't been for her, I never would have come up here after you at all."

"I don't understand."

"Well, the girl evidently had so much faith in the old charlatan that I thought I'd just see if there was anything to it. So when he said you would get out of a taxi at the head of Glancy Street, I just thought to myself, 'Young woman, I'll just call your hand and see if there is anything to what you believe.' "

"I see," nodded Page, staring at his companion intently.

Mr. Willett proceeded with the unembarrassed analysis of the new intellectuals.

"To be frank, I suppose my observation of the girl had its—Freudian basis. We're all such machines you know. Vital machines, with the singular faculty of reproducing ourselves; a faculty which engages our thoughts most of the time according to Freud, though he gives no reason why. Now really I wonder why we do think about sex most of the time? It's an unreasonable obsession, come to think of it."

"It might be," suggested Page, laughing and resorting to Hevesh's theory. "There are forces outside of us using us."

Willett stared up at his tall companion.

"Oh, that's mystical; nothing scientific in that."

"No, I said it by way of jest," qualified Page.

"Anyway, it's quite a question." Mr. Willett blew the ashes off his cigaret in evident enjoyment of himself. "But now you know the real reason I observed this Orloff girl so closely was not what I said at all. Or—not exactly—I remembered her because— Well, her attitude toward that fellow Hevesh and everything—because she made me think of Mary Magdelene."

A little quiver ran through Page's diaphragm.

"What!" he aspirated.

Willett made an apologetic gesture.

"—— foolishness, of course. Mary Magdelene in a Chicago police court. You know sometimes I think that's why I don't get on in my line any better than I do. I'm too —— imaginative to make a good reporter—Mary Magdelene!"

And Mr. Willett gave his sniff of scornful laughter.

THE reporter's chance comparison of Vita Orloff to Mary of Magdelene set off Lawrence Page's imagination and as he approached the police station on Water Street he thought of Pilate's court in Jerusalem. There must have been the same mixture of races in the Roman tribunal as he now saw around the police court drawn from Chicago's foreign population.

There must have been the same streaming of the crowd into court to see the wonder-maker; the same murmurings of the poor people whom the man called Christ had befriended. No doubt the curiosity seekers in Jerusalem arose and stood in the dull perfunctory manner when Pilate entered his court as did this Chicago crowd when Judge Benson appeared at his bar.

Never before did Lawrence Page realize how squalid, how commonplace, how perfunctory must have been that long-gone trial of the man called Christ. There must have been the same rancours and disputes among the lawyers; the same calling and recalling of witnesses; and the amazing drama of a new spiritual life entering the affairs of men must have been utterly unrealized by any heart in the throng.

Did the man called Christ himself realize it as he sat silent before the Tetrarch just as Hevesh sat mute before the judge of the Water Street police court? Both were charged with healing the sick unlawfully.

The warrant which the clerk of the court read against Hevesh was filled with dull legal reiteration: "practising medicine without a license; medical malpractise which resulted in the death of a baby named Violet Bebb; interfering with the functioning of the public Board of Health, and so on and on, construing a single act into a violation of numberless laws.

At the mention of the death of the Bebb baby, murmurings broke out in the court-room. An old woman rose up in court and with that disregard to her surroundings characteristic of elderly woman broke into a tirade.

"Judge Benson, you know Father Hevesh didn't kill that baby! It was the city clinic medicine. It was—"

Her voice was drowned in cries of: "Dot's right! Eet iss true," from all over the court-room. A wild-haired, black-eyed Italian arose to shout something about American freedom.

Judge Benson rapped for order and threatened to clear the court. Then he asked the formal question if Hevesh were guilty or not guilty. The healer began explaining what he had done; gone to the Bebb home, found the child with a fever and had advised bathing it. Judge Benson interrupted:

"Let your answer be guilty or not guilty," he requested not unkindly. "It is a purely technical question and has little relation to the proof."

The city attorney then began laying his evidence before the court. He had a man who had seen Hevesh take a fee for practising medicine after he had been warned by the court to desist. Here the city attorney, a Mr. Perewski, called his witness, a Mr. Giordi Lambrelli, to the stand. Lambrelli testified that on the preceding evening while he was standing on the corner of Water and Boddler Streets he had seen a beggar with a sore give Hevesh a fee of fifty cents.

"Did Mr. Hevesh ask for this fee?" inquired the judge.

"No, the beggar himself was talking to some gentlemen who came up about that time, and said he gave the fifty cents to Hevesh as a gift. He said he thought it was a privilege of some sort. I didn't quite understand what he meant."

At this point a young man with the pale face and little spot of mustache, the air of wisdom obligingly withheld to prevent bewilderment among the laymen, which mark a young interne at a city hospital, now arose to expound in a detached superior way:

"That's an old trick, your Honor, and beside the point anyway. As a medical man I would like to say that the real onus in this case is that this man Hevesh makes the medical practise of the city clinic uncertain. We visiting physicians are constantly coming into conflict with prescriptions from Mr. Hevesh and others like him who have granny remedies."

"The charge against him is that he accepted a fee," observed the judge.

The young interne was surprized at the technicality of the judicial mind.

"He places the health of the whole Water Street district in jeopardy. Why can't he be suppressed as a public nuisance?"

A voice from the rear of the building shouted out—

"Maybe our babies are public nuisances, too!"

"Let us get on with the actual charges brought against Mr. Hevesh," interposed the justice. "Who actually was in the sick-room when the Bebb baby died?"

"A girl by the name of Vita Orloff," answered the clerk of the court, looking over his list of witnesses.

"Let Vita Orloff be called to the stand."

"Oh, yes! Is Vita Orloff in the court-room? Will you please come forward?" called the bailiff.

The Roumanian girl had been sitting behind Hevesh out of Page's sight. Now she arose, a little frightened, before the crowded court-room. A nervous trickle went through Page's chest at the sight of her. He recalled Willett's comparison of her to Mary Magdalene, and it imparted to her a sort of melancholy poetry.

She was on the witness stand now answering in a low voice the questions of the city attorney. The lawyer led her to agree to every detail of his case against Hevesh evidently much against her will.

The Bebb baby had died while she was in the Bebb flat. She was acting under Hevesh's orders. Hevesh had asked her to sit up with the infant. Yes, he had prescribed a treatment of his own and she supposed had interrupted the city clinic's treatment. The baby had died very suddenly right under her hands. It had frightened her.

Half a dozen times Page writhed internally to qualify her answers. The court-room scared her out of all nice precision in her replies. When she had finished her story she was called back once or twice for cross-examination, and immediately fell into contradictions and restatements. She finished in great confusion, and immediately began making preparations to leave the court-room.

Page was moved by an impulse to go with her. He wanted to render his testimony immediately so he could follow her. In an interval he lifted his voice and called Judge Benson's attention to the fact that he was the other person in the sick-room at the time of the Bebb child's death.

"How came a gentleman like you in a tenement sick-room?" inquired the attorney more out of curiosity than as a lawyer.

Page explained his situation as briefly as he could.

"The point I wanted to make was this," continued the Virginian, "Mrs. Bebb, the mother of the dead baby, was the one who cautioned me not to use the medicine from the city dispensary. She insisted that I bathe the baby in a basin of water left by Mr. Hevesh here."

"Did you understand that Hevesh had left these instructions with the Bebb woman?" inquired the city attorney.

"I didn't know whether these instructions originated with her or with Hevesh. The way the matter turned out prevented that question from having anything to do with the matter."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, as I sat in the room I saw the medicine left by the city clinic, so I decided I would give some of it to the baby, which I did."

A sudden silence fell over the court.

"Then the city's prescription was administered anyway?" said the judge in another tone.

"It was, and by me."

"And the baby died anyway?"

"The baby took the dose and died immediately. That's all I know. The prescription was written out by a Dr. Nathan O. Person, if he is a member of the city clinic staff. Does your Honor, does any member of this court happen to know whether Dr. Nathan O. Person is an accredited member of the city clinic?"

Page asked this very earnestly, turning from one to another member of the court, but a hubbub broke out in the court-room.

"Dr. Person—" "He prescribed for my little Berthe—" He tended me ould uncle—"

Half a dozen angry voices bearing the same tenor came from different parts of the room. Page saw a lank, dirty man with an angry face arise and make for him across the crowded courtroom. Page heard the city attorney calling out sharply that this evidence was irrelevant. The judge discussed this point with the city attorney and was about to rule upon it.

At this moment into the door of the police court came the smallish Dr. Strachan with his yellow Mephistophelian features. For some reason a silence followed his entry. The whole room turned to look at him.

"Your Honor, may I speak a word?" he inquired of the court.

"In regard to this case?"

"I would like to testify to a medical theory expressed by the defendant. It was a theory that disease germs understand and reply to human emotions."

"How can that be relevant to this proceeding, Dr. Strachan?" inquired Judge Benson.

"It can form the ground of new proceedings against him, your Honor, an inquiry into his mental state."

Here Page began working his way through the crowd to follow the direction Vita Orloff had taken. He suddenly had lessened interest in any new proceeding against Hevesh. As he was nearing the door a man's hand reached out of the press and caught him by the collar. A thick voice said—

"You're the —— man who killed my little Violet!" and a fist, belonging to no one in particular, caught Page a jarring blow on the side of his neck.

Page reeled and struck back. Immediately the crowd surged and formed a close ring of bodies about the combatants. Page then saw his assailant, a lanky man in grimy clothes, flinging fists of stony solidity into his face and chest. The Virginian fought back. The circle snapped, "Put 'em out!" and began chivvying them to the door. The judge was rapping for order. Somebody cried—

"Who's the roughneck!" Another voice answered—

"He's Martin Bebb! This —— stool-pigeon for the city clinic killed his baby!"

Immediately the neutral crowd turned against Page. A dozen hands reached for him. He was snatched away from Bebb. The building seemed to whirl before Page's eyes. He saw himself headed for the door. He was shoved through it, reeling.

Then he felt himself being manhandled down a flight of crowded stairs. He heard cries of "Stool pigeon! Clinic stool pigeon!" He felt himself falling down the stairs. Dozens of fists struck him and passed him on. He was bumped, jarred, struck and finally somebody whirled him out into the street below with a final anathema, "—— city stool pigeon!"

And there he was lying flat on his belly in the filthy gutter.

The Southerner was furious. He got up from his hands and knees filled with a homicidal impulse to get a pistol and shoot into the foreign crowd about the court door.

The gang in the doorway however had already turned their attention to the trial upstairs and had forgot their victim.

Page was flaming with the concentrated rage of an aristocrat at being manhandled by *hoi polloi*. The Southerner rushed at the crowd and plucked a man from the door.

"Here, you cur," he snarled. "You'll give me satisfaction for this!"

The man twisted about blankly—

"Satisfaction for what?"

Page hit him straight from the shoulder and the man dropped very simply in a sitting posture and looked up at the Virginian. Then he seemed to recognize him. His rough face lighted up in disgust.

"I see; you're the stool pigeon; beefing because the gang chucked you out. Take my advice, buddy, and beat it on up the street. If the gang starts again, you won't get off so easy."

VI

WHILE Lawrence Page was still mentally cursing his assailants and calling on a remote deity to consign them to the grids of hell, he was also glancing up and down the crowded street in an effort to pick out the figure of Vita Orloff. She was not in sight, and still fuming from the attack made on him, he started walking mechanically toward No. 213 Water Street.

As he walked, his thoughts gradually shifted from his fight to the fact that this misadventure had come about through his being mistaken for an aide to the mysterious Dr. Nathan O. Person.

The more Page pondered this matter the more extraordinary it became. This Dr. Person seemed to be affecting his life from every angle. He seemed to affect many lives maleficently and yet no one seemed quite to know who he was. The question he had asked the court at large concerning Person had remained unanswered. As he threaded the crowded street, absorbed in this mood, he was stopped by a new sewer being opened in the pavement, with temporary fencing set up to guard it. A foreman, a Portuguese, stood near-by watching the work. Page was moved to ask this fellow if he knew anything about Dr. Nathan O. Person. The olive-hued one turned suspiciously on Page.

"Whatta you want do to me?"

"Nothing. I simply want to know his address."

Page had to repeat this sentence several times before the foreman absorbed its complicated English. Then he said—

"You gotta card tell me to come to him?"

"Oh, no, no! I simply want—"

But the foreigner preferred to develop the sentence which he had understood correctly—

"You gotta card tell you come to him?"

Page let it go at that.

"A friend of mine has."

"He sick?"

"Don't know, not healthy maybe," said Page, dropping into the abbreviated English one learns to use in Chicago.

The foreman glanced about and lowered his voice.

"You tell your frien' not go."

"Don't know where I find who he is?"

The Portuguese shrugged.

"City clinic up yonder, senhor. No go there. Goo'by."

Page thanked him and moved on in the direction the fellow had pointed. It was on the way to Vita Orloff's and would require but a moment to step in and ask a few questions.

When Page entered the clinic he found

the usual bored and indifferent young man at the registrar's desk, who, as Page approached him, mechanically picked up a card and a pen and asked—

"Name, age and address?"

The clerk's mind was evidently far away from what he was doing, and it occurred to the Virginian that everybody was more or less like that, creatures with vague wandering thoughts and emotions, exactly the sort of poised mechanism which could be most easily moved by an exterior force. It looked as if the human mind might have been especially evolved for—here Page recalled what Hevesh had said and an amazing explanation spread itself obscurely before him—

"Age, name and address!" repeated the clerk rather sharply when he finally discovered he had not been answered.

"I merely wanted some information," mumbled Page, trying to hold the thought which threatened to slip out of his mind.

The clerk looked at Page with the eyes of a man musing on other things.

"It's owing to what you want to know—what's your question?"

Page pondered what he had wanted to know.

"Who makes out the prescriptions issued at this city clinic?"

"You mean who writes the original prescriptions?"

"Yes."

"Um—well, the young internes see the patients and write descriptions of the diseases, and the specialists at the central clinic prescribe treatment."

"A number of specialists."

The clerk grew slightly interested now.

"Oh, yes; the most brilliant physicians of Chicago. They are dollar a year men, you know; a kind of fraternity—you know—civic devotion and all that sort of thing. Fine set of men."

The clerk was now looking intently at Page to see if he had transferred any of his idea to his visitor.

"I was interested in a particular doctor," explained the Virginian. "Do you know anything about a Dr. Nathan O. Person?"

"We get a number of prescriptions written by him."

"But you don't know him?"

"Not personally, of course."

"Did you know his address was not in the telephone book?"

"I have never had occasion to look it up."

"You know nothing at all about him?"

"Well," said the clerk thoughtfully, "I had an idea that Person was one of the most brilliant physicians on the major clinic's staff."

"Why?"

"He prescribes for the most desperate cases of sickness; and then his name is always in the newspapers."

"And the papers always state that he lost this or that patient!" criticized Page sharply.

The clerk looked at him blankly.

"Certainly. It couldn't be otherwise."

"How is that?" inquired Page with an uncomfortable feeling that he had asked a silly question.

"Because only deaths get reported to the papers," said the clerk with a slight smile. "His cures never come out in the papers. They aren't news."

"Why, that's a fact!" admitted Page quite relieved.

The clerk laughed outright.

"Were you beginning to doubt his qualifications on account of this adverse publicity in the newspapers? A lot of those uneducated wops and bohunks and chinks and dagoes and what-not do. The ordinary human mistake never stops to reason on anything."

"Human mistake," repeated Page with a smile. "Is that your name for the ordinary man?"

"If you don't believe it, take my job for twenty-four hours," nodded the clerk with warmth. "Why, three-fourths of the people who come in here are human mistakes. They ought never to have been bred. They are fit for nothing on God's earth."

"Perhaps they are just passing through," suggested Page, thinking of Hevesh again.

"They are; they have a through ticket from nowhere to nothing." The clerk came back to business again. "Do you happen to have a card from Person?"

"A friend of mine has."

"Well, you can tell your friend that he has the finest talent in the city to help him."

Page was greatly relieved. He thanked the young man and turned toward the door, meaning to go on to Vita Orloff's. When he was within about twelve feet of the entrance he received a little shock to see the man, Hevesh, move past the door.

The Virginian stopped stock still, moved by a strong impulse not to be seen. He was afraid that this man Hevesh would somehow prevent him from seeing the Roumanian girl. Already the healer had twice prevented their meeting; apparently by accident each time.

At that moment the Virginian had his shock of disappointment more powerfully repeated by seeing Hevesh return to the clinic door and step inside. The powerful man saw Page and bowed to him.

"I have you to thank for my temporary freedom, Mr. Page," he said in his slightly foreign accent. "Your evidence has liberated me for a while."

"Mighty glad to have done it," returned the Virginian, and as he said this he was thinking, "Now this is the very barb of irony, that my evidence should have freed him so that he could interrupt my visit to —" but he was ashamed of these thoughts, and the next moment berated himself by thinking, "My ——, isn't there any solidity or worth about me. Is there no bottom to these boiling impulses of mine. Will my mind never possess some unity, some fixity of purpose. My thoughts are a weathervane whirled by the wind—"

WHILE Page was oppressed by this seeming futility in his most intimate mental life, he heard the man, Hevesh, ask the clerk when the board of alienists would meet in the city clinic.

The clerk gave some answer the Virginian didn't catch, but the question aroused Page. When Hevesh came back toward the door, he asked sharply—

"Did Strachan put through his ridiculous motion to bring you before a board of alienists?"

Hevesh assented gravely—

"He has laid the beginnings of such an action."

The two men moved along the thoroughfare side by side and presently Page said—

"I see through his plan, don't you?"

"What do you see?" asked Hevesh with an impassive face.

"He hopes to discredit you with the people around here by bringing your sanity into question. To throw suspicion on such a point is almost to damn you, don't you think so?"

"It will do me no good," admitted Hevesh absently.

The strange, heavy man seemed full of grave thoughts, and suddenly Page's former question returned to him—why every human being, even a man like Hevesh, was a continual prey to wandering, unfixed thoughts. Nobody's mind held a true course for ten minutes at a time.

The mystic interrupted him—

"Will you pardon me, Mr. Page, but have you any idea what force is back of your sudden passion for this girl, Vita Orloff?"

The Virginian was not surprized. He had long ago sensed in Hevesh an indifference to the Anglo-Saxon squeamishness about any mention of passion. The healer evidently accepted it simply as a part of the mechanics of life. Page looked at the heavy man shrewdly.

"Knowing your theory of souls, I think I can guess your solution," he said, "but of course you know I don't accept that theory."

"That is because your American nation and the English nation before you have been working and building material things for thousands of years. For ages your race has had its mind centered on nothing but matter."

Page glanced up the avenue and saw the blue peaks of the enormous skyscrapers in the Loop.

"That is probably true, but it doesn't destroy the logic of materialism."

"Everything has its logic," answered Hevesh gently. "Logic is merely the mode in which you think a thing and has nothing whatever to do with its verity. Now, for example, the action of your own mind has puzzled you today; you don't know the logic of why it sways to and fro in perpetual unbalance."

"I had thought of that," admitted Page.

"By being most delicately unstable, its ideas can be wielded by disincarnate spirits. Perhaps invisible beings mold our purposes just as our sculptors and architects shape a fine piece of marble in their building."

"The trouble is," said Page, "your notion is too shadowy, Mr. Hevesh; also you are reasoning from an analogy which is dangerous, and it leads you into mysticism where you lose all certain footing."

"Still a particular soul desirous of entering the flesh would explain your sudden passion for Vita Orloff. You don't admire her, you are not intelligible to her, you are not of her social class, she has the same physical make-up as millions of other women here in Chicago; but you want no one but her, nothing but her, you think of her perpetually night and day. It is not only you, it is almost every other man and woman in the city; it is every bird, beast and insect in earth or air. All created things are puppets for the strongest passion in the universe; the passion of innumerable souls to enter the opportunity of flesh and matter."

Page stared at the fellow, and such was his earnestness that for a moment the ordinary crowded tenement street of Chicago was a vast processional bound on some cosmic pilgrimage from infinity to infinity.

The man Hevesh stood looking at the Virginian.

"This Vita Orloff, brother—treat her gently, lovingly, as befits comrades traveling together on a long, long journey."

He lifted his hat to Page in a queer foreign bow, paused a moment to say Willett the reporter had told him just before he left the court-house that he wanted to get Page on the telephone. The healer gave the number, then moved away down Water Street, a heavy, solid figure which soon was lost in the rabble on the thoroughfare.

With his going the transfiguration of the scene before Page slowly faded out. It became a Chicago street again, busy, hurried and, in the main, unhappy. The Virginian stood pondering the strange ideas of his recent companion and a hope entered his mind that Hevesh would not mention his belief to the alienist commission before whom he would later appear.

After a while Page remembered Willett's call and went into a drug store to ring up the number Hevesh had given him. When he established connection and called for Willett, a girl's voice exclaimed in a breath—

"Oh, is this Mr. Page?"

"Yes, and this is—"

"Millie Harran. Mr. Willett is here. We are dreadfully worried."

"What's the matter?" asked the Virginian in alarm.

"At an editorial Mr. Meachem wrote!" cried the girl.

"Millie, how on earth could an editorial —what edition of the paper did it come out in?"

"It's not out yet."

"Where did you see it?"

"We found the notes of it in Mr. Meachem's waste basket! Oh, Mr. Page we're afraid he—he's—"

"What!" cried Page in alarm. "Not gone to—"

"He's not at the office. I called Mr. Willett up and we've both been trying to find him. We've been telephoning everywhere. We were wishing we could get in touch with you."

"Yes, Hevesh told me you wanted me."

"Hevesh—" came a pause and Page heard her ask a question of some one in the room. Then a moment later, "Why Mr. Willett hasn't spoken to Hevesh. He couldn't have. He didn't know anything about this until he got back to the *Tribune* office from the trial." Another pause; then, "Mr. Willett says he supposes Hevesh was up to his old stuff, whatever that means."

"Yes. Well I'll come right on up to your place. Do anything I can. Good-by till I see you again."

The Virginian hurried out of the drug store and around a block to an elevated station. He reached the platform just in time to jump past the closing doors of an express. A moment later the long train thundered forward at the level of the third-story windows of the buildings in the endless street. Moved by impatience, Page walked to the front car and stood looking out of the forward window at the track ahead.

The huge apartment buildings reduced the track to a kind of ribbon winding about their base. Far ahead in the Loop glimmered the peaks of the skyscrapers of the city. How immutable they seemed, these gigantic audacities of architecture. They reduced the lives of the human swarm about their pediments to the buzzing of flies. Staring ahead at the skyscrapers, Page lost the last of the illusion Hevesh had wrought in him, and became the occidental materialist again; appreciative of masonry, spires, railroads, banks, radios and airships, things he could put his finger in—like Thomas after the crucifixion.

TWENTY minutes later the Virginian reached the Harran home. A servant directed him to the study and there he found Millie Harran at the telephone and the reporter Willett searching for telephone numbers through half a dozen volumes of the Chicago directory. As Page entered, Millie placed her hand over the mouth of her receiver.

"Thank goodness you've come." Then, as she returned swiftly to the telephone, "you tell him, Will. Is this the Ajax Turkish bath-house? Is Mr. Henry Meachem there? An editor of the *Tribune*—Oh, bother, these foreigners can't understand anything—a newspaper, the *Tribune*, the Chicago *Tribune*."

"We're trying to locate Meachem," began the reporter, staring at Page intently; then, "Millie, he couldn't have gone to any of the bath-houses. He wouldn't stay thirty-six hours at a bath-house."

"He hasn't been gone thirty-six hours!" cried Page.

"No, he is going to stay that long."

"How do you know?" cried the Virginian.

"Because the completed editorial is locked up in a time-vault in the *Tribune* building and it can't be opened for thirty-six hours."

"What about this editorial?" cried Page. "What could he have written to rouse you to this pitch?"

Millie broke in—

"Mr. Page, we wanted to ask you do you remember the address on that card I brought to your hotel?"

"The Person address?"

"Yes."

"Dr. Nathan O. Person, 14 Rush Street."

"You are sure you are right?"

"Positively. I've been there myself."

Willett gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, that's something. You know we can't find a single trace of this Dr. Person anywhere. I called up the medical societies, the registrar of medical licenses in Chicago, the lists of automobile owners. Millie has stood there and questioned hundreds of doctors to see if they knew him, or knew of him—not a thing, nothing!"

"What did you want to get hold of him for?"

"To see if Meachem was with him."

"Even if he is you needn't be so frightened," comforted Page, "I was talking to the clerk in the city clinic and he said he thought Person was one of the best surgeons."

"Did he know him personally?"

"Well—no, he didn't."

"The only thing I see for us to do, Millie," planned Willett, "is for me and Page to go to 14 Rush Street. Both Person and Meachem are bound to come there within thirty-six hours."

"Let me see the editorial notes which gave you such a scare," suggested Page curiously.

"Certainly!"

The reporter darted to a table where lay a half-dozen crumpled yellow second sheets which evidently had been smoothed out by rubbing with the hand. They were written in lead pencil and were a little blurred from the smoothing.

Page sat down in a chair by the study window to read what had so excited his two friends. The window stood open and displayed a strip of lawn, perhaps ten feet wide, on which grew a lilac bush and a climbing rose. Beyond that arose the ferro-concrete wall of the neighboring apartment house.

On the paper was scribbled the heading, "Vale," then followed a series of disconnected sentences which Meachem evidently intended later to develop into a finished editorial. Page read:

> Today the writer of this editorial faces the inconceivable. Death is not in the experience of man; nor is it in his racial experience. The mother and father of the writer of this article *was* alive when he was conceived. His grandmothers and grandfathers were living when his parents were conceived, and so on down the ages to the first pulsing protoplasm.
>
> No living creature was ever born with a knowledge of death.
>
> Still, death has kept a running commentary on life; pruning it, shaping it, directing its exuberance. But like the Siniatic God, it works with averted face and never shows its awful front to Man.
>
> There is a Roman legend that a great chasm once opened the foundations of the Imperial City and to close it the most virtuous and virile of Roman manhood was flung into the chasm.
>
> The writer believes and hopes that through modern wisdom that ancient legend has been reversed. He hopes that today marks the turning point in history. From now henceforth he trusts that the rifts in our civilization, our crimes, our weaknesses, our stupidities will be closed by the sacrifice of the meanest and lowliest—
>
> The writer of these lines trusts it is not vanity in the weak if they feel some glory that their prone figures shall form a stairway on which humanity may—

Page sat staring at the incomplete sentence. He glanced up and found Willett watching him.

"Do you read into it the same thing we do?" asked the reporter in an apprehensive voice.

"But, Meachem," exclaimed Page in a lowered voice, "why in the world should he look upon himself as one of the mean and the lowly?"

"That's the irony of his life; of all human life!" cried Willett. "Back of every great human sacrifice lies a profound humility. Christ personified it; Buddha had it; Manes felt it; Zoroaster taught it—humility. That word has a fine religious flavor, but translate it into its modern equivalent and you get quite a different tang.

"What is that?" asked Page wondering.

"An inferiority complex."

"What an idea!"

"Yet it is the truth. Only men with an inferiority complex can ever perform any great sacrificial gesture. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. But now you see the fallacy back of this editorial. There is no way for the weak and mean to sacrifice themselves, Page. The moment they do that they enter the lists of the earth's greatest sons."

The choked voice of Millie interrupted their conversation.

"Won't you please go do something. If you loved him, you wouldn't stop to talk while the most terrible things may be happening to him!"

Both men stirred themselves out of that philosophic trance which perpetually loses the vigor of action. They explained to Millie in polite chorus, that they were going immediately to the Rush Street hospital and watch for Meachem's coming.

"Nothing can happen to him while we are on the scene, Millie," assured the reporter, and the two men set off for the mysterious hospital on Rush Street.

VII

IN THE cab on the way to the Rush Street address, Lawrence Page laid before the reporter the series of uncanny incidents which had touched his life in connection with the mysterious Dr. Nathan O. Person. As the taxi wound through the traffic, the reporter sat chewing at an unlighted cigar, listening carefully to the recital.

"You are sure the name you saw on the bottle in the Bebb flat was the same you saw on old man Morgan's card?"

"Certainly," said Page. "That was what impressed me."

Willett nodded and mumbled around his cigar—

"What was Meachem's disease?"

"I don't know. He had just taken a physical examination to obtain a marriage license."

"Must have been serious."

"No doubt."

"Now look here!" Willett removed his cigar to stress his point. "It couldn't have been ophthalmia or any children's diseases?"

"Certainly not, I don't see what you're driving at."

"Just this, if what you tell me is correct, it appears that Dr. Nathan O. Person is appointed on the city clinic as an oculist, a specialist in children's diseases and also a specialist in any disease which has overtaken Meachem."

"I had thought of that," nodded Page. "I had decided he must be a general practitioner."

The reporter became sharply negative.

"No, that's impossible. That's exactly what the physicians on the city clinic are not. Every one of them is a specialist in his line. Many of them are prominent; some famous. Why, no one so humble as a general practitioner would ever get on the city clinic."

"But, Willett, we are simply running around in a logical circle," protested Page. "One moment we prove Dr. Person does treat a number of unrelated diseases, and the next moment you insist he must be highly specialized. That is a flat contradiction which gets us nowhere."

Willett frowned, bit viciously at his cigar and after the car had glided two or three blocks he straightened suddenly.

"I have it. Person is a specialist, but he is no doctor at all."

"What are you talking about?"

"He's a research man."

Page stared at the reporter.

"What sort of a research man?"

"That's a finely drawn question, Page. We'll have to get at that by the common factor which we find in his work. Let me see now— Col. Morgan—the Bebb baby—Meachem—"

"All with completely different diseases."

"And didn't you say at the Water Street court, a number of foreigners were suspicious about deaths which had occurred in their families?"

"Yes, I got thrown down a flight of stairs because I was suspected of being his aide."

"The —— you did!"

"It's a fact," snapped Page with returning indignation, "the only common factor I see in his practise is that his patients die."

The reporter leaned forward as a man struck with a brilliant idea.

"By George, I wonder if you haven't hit it!" he cried.

"Hit what?"

"The explanation — Dr. Person's specialty."

"Look here, Willett, will you tell me what you mean?"

"I mean Dr. Person's line of research—death."

"A specialist in death?"

"That's right!"

"That's ghoulish, inhuman, there's no such thing!"

The reporter leveled his cigar at his companion.

"I tell you, Page, you've hit it. Meachem's editorial shows he is expecting death. And when you think of it, what could be more logical. Doctors have investigated every field under the sun except death itself."

"But they work against death!" cried Page horrified.

"That's the point; they are trying a new tack. They have never entered a simple investigation of death *per se.* They have never brought death on an individual to investigate it as death. Diseases, yes, but not death. Why, Page, the idea is pregnant with possibilities. Who knows the secrets science may wring from a study of man's chiefest terror. It may revolutionize—"

"Willett, you are going crazy!" cried the Virginian in amazement.

"Not at all! Don't you see, this will be the next great step in psychology. Doctors have always approached death at an angle, through disease or accident. Thousands of men have specialized in diseases, but nobody in the final tragedy itself. That is why Dr. Person is seeking death in every variety of form."

"What would be the object of such a horrible research?"

"To see why death occurs, and what occurs. It is the most mysterious event of life—its end. Why do our lives wear themselves away and lose themselves while the amoeba, the protozoa lead immortal existences by fission? Why is this complexity of man condemned to die? It is high time somebody should try to find out."

At this point Page recalled what Hevesh had advanced and now he ventured with a certain timidity—

"Is it possible that death may not have an ultra-human reason, Willett?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well—suppose there were such things as souls. Mightn't it be possible that a soul could get a certain development only in a human body?"

Willett was staring blankly.

"A soul!"

"Yes," repeated Page a little apologetically. "It's just a hypothesis, you know."

Willett shook his head.

"Stick to the concrete, Page. That's the difference between science and metaphysics. One doesn't know what it's talking about; the other does." Mr. Willett laughed heartily and flung his chewed cigar through the cab window.

"Men die because their souls finish with their body. Page, you have an antic disposition." He became serious again. "Well, that's that. But, look here, if my clew turns out right, I'm on the eve of the biggest scoop in the medical world. A specialist in death. Why, my ——, it'll be like finding another Freud. The minute I turn that story loose, it'll ring round the world!"

"We've got to get Meachem out of danger!" interposed Page.

"Sure! Sure! I'm not forgetting Meachem! If we can get into the Rush Street laboratory before Person and Meachem get there, we can look at his instruments—and also be able to stop Meachem's death," added the reporter as an afterthought. He peered down the street they were traversing and cried out—

"Isn't that the place; it looks like what you described."

IT WAS the place and immediately it brought back to Page the image of Vita Orloff and old man Morgan standing at the rusty iron gate. The girl weeping silently as the caretaker led the old man away to his death. The memory caused Page to curse silently. If he had known the tragedy which awaited the pathetic old Kentuckian he would have—

He began scrutinizing the grounds.

"I saw a caretaker when I was here last," he warned.

The men got out of the cab.

"Everything seems clear now," said the reporter, examining the lawn.

"What shall we do—hide in the shrubbery or patrol up and down the street?"

"We ought to break into the house," planned Willett. "It's rather likely to be full of the most extraordinary psychological equipment. I'd like to see it. Then we can keep watch better from the inside. Besides that, if I see his instruments, when he comes I can ask intelligent questions."

"Of whom?" inquired Page.

"Dr. Person, of course."

"Look here, Willet, do you imagine you are going upon an entirely pacific errand? Don't you realize we are trying to prevent—well—murder?"

"My dear Page," said Willett, "don't you know the temperament of a specialist in death would be no more combative than an icicle. He is likely to be the most informing of men."

"We're going to need guns," growled Page.

"We will more likely need arguments. If he has persuaded Meachem to immolate himself for the cause of science he will very likely persuade you to agree to the same plan. You'd better brush up your wits, not your fire-arms."

The men climbed over the locked gate and approached the house. The notion of entering a place where a man's life depended on his dialectic horrified Page. He began wondering what he could have to say for the preservation of life. The only real argument he could think of was that a soul was using it and that, of course, was barred by the prevailing American attitude on the subject. He already foresaw he was going to be hard put to it to show Dr. Person any right or necessity for Meachem's continued existence.

Willett had climbed over a hedge of box-shrub and was examining a basement window.

"If you'll bring a stone I think I can knock this boarding loose," said the reporter. "It's rather decayed."

Page looked about and found a stone of convenient size. The reporter took it and began hammering at the boards, and presently the rotted wood gave way. Willett pushed the window inward, put his legs in the aperture, turned on his belly and slid in backward. As he did so, he whispered to Page in a voice a little shaken from excitement.

"I wish I had a camera man to get a shot of this stuff. If I can find a phone, I'll ring up the office. This is going to be a shocker."

And he lowered himself into the darkness backward. Page remained at the window with a certain tightening of his nerves. Presently he heard his companion moving about on the inside.

"It's all right," came a whisper. "Come on in."

The Virginian twisted about and lowered himself through the opening. He felt Willett catch his legs and place his feet on a table immediately beneath him. Page stood for a moment and as soon as his eyes were accustomed to the gloom, found himself in an ordinary basement. The dark outline of a furnace occupied the central place; some left-over coal was scattered in a corner, while mops, old buckets, a tub and dried paint pails were scattered here and there.

The two companions remained silent for several minutes, listening for any signs of life in the villa. As they heard nothing, Willett proposed briskly:

"Well, let's examine Dr. Person's things before he gets here. Then I want to call a picture man if I can find a phone—he may not want us to take pictures afterward."

"I am sure your guess is right," said Page with a touch of irony, "asking a professional murderer to allow pictures taken—"

"We agree there," said Willett easily. "Come on."

He led the way to another door in the basement which he opened cautiously. This room was clean and empty except for a table with a white cloth on it.

A faint uncertain odor hung in this place which reminded Page of the scent one gets in a hospital corridor. The mere faintness of the impression seemed to Page more sinister than a whole room full of Willett's melodramatic instruments.

"This seems to be a sort of—of cooling room," said the reporter uncertainly. He sniffed silently about in the air. "Maybe this odor has seeped down from the room above. I fancy the room overhead must be the operating room."

He pulled himself up to a high cellar window and peered through the boarding trying to learn the lay of the house. He lowered himself again.

"Let's find the stairs."

The stairs were found covered by a door. The men climbed up to the main floor of the villa. None of the inner doors was locked and the searchers went freely from room to room. Willett got to the suspected chamber immediately above the point in the basement. Even Page entered half expecting to see an array of fantastic instruments, but this room was empty and dusty and had the appearance of prolonged disuse. The reporter glanced around the chamber and then at Page with a growing mystification in his face.

"The odor isn't up here at all?"

"Doesn't seem to be."

"Let's look around through the other rooms."

Page agreed and the two companions went through suite after suite of lifeless, unused rooms, until presently it became clear even to Willett that No. 14 Rush Street was simply a deserted old villa and nothing more.

"Why, Page," said the journalist, "if the city clinic had ever used this building for any purpose whatever it wouldn't be like this."

He stared about the dusty room on the first floor to which they had returned.

"It's used right enough," nodded Page. "I saw—"

"Perhaps there are some secret doors somewhere?"

Page shook his head.

"No, this mystery, Willett, is a simpler affair than you are trying to make it. Actual mysteries are seldom elaborate. One simply gets a detail wrong and then none of the parts of the puzzle will fit. This strikes me as simply a retired quiet spot adapted to murder."

"Murder!" echoed Willett sarcastically, "well that certainly explains a lot, murder. Why, every mystery worthy of the name begins with murder; it doesn't end with it."

Page made no reply, but stood pondering the meager facts he had in hand.

"I believe I'll go down and have another look at that table in the basement."

"All right. You don't mind my searching the walls for a secret entrance to some room do you? You needn't grin, there have been such things—set-offs in the plans of a house for secret rooms, false walls and so forth."

"I swear," ejaculated Page, "the very soul of America is mechanical. It attempts to solve every problem by mechanics —instruments—set-offs—an experimenter on the material phases of death. —— it, the great implication of death is that it is the beginning of the immaterial."

"Will you excuse me if I continue sounding these walls?" queried Willett with a shrug.

Page made a gesture of acquiescence.

"After all," he thought, "I'm of the same stripe myself, but not quite so pronounced. I have never really believed a thing that Hevesh has said, but I have moments when I feel as if I did. The difference between the religious and the irreligious in America lies in the degrees of their skepticism. A skeptic's doubt stands on the surface; the faithful's cowers in his heart."

The Southerner watched Willett in cold, unsmiling irony. The reporter went *tap-tap-tapping* on the walls with his knuckles. In the midst of this Willett gave a little gasp which broke in on the Virginian's mood.

"What have you found?" asked Page, dropping his critical attitude.

"Come here and look."

Willett was near a window and was looking out through a crevice in the boarding. Page came up to him in three soundless strides.

"Look through this hole," directed Willett.

"What is it?"

"There's that squarehead caretaker on the lawn again."

"—— he is!" ejaculated Page adjusting his eye to the aperture.

Sure enough, there was the Swede in the yard below him, clipping away at the straggling boxes. There was something about the man which dismayed the Virginian.

"That man isn't a caretaker, he's a sentinel," whispered Willett.

"That's true, of course," agreed Page.

"It means," said the reporter with a little quiver of horror in his voice, "it means Meachem is coming."

"I suppose it does. We've got to stop him. There's no way for him to get in without our seeing him. It's all so intangible and cobwebby. That —— squarehead will conduct Meachem inside exactly as he did Col. Morgan."

Both men remained peering out the hole for several moments when Willett suddenly clutched his companion's shoulder.

"I've got it, Page! I understand it!"

The Virginian started nervously.

"What?"

"That man down there is Dr. Nathan O. Person himself."

Page shook his head with a sort of bruised feeling at his companion's continued flightiness. Willett was certainly not a good newspaper man. He was, as he had said a long time ago, too imaginative.

"Let's not theorize any more. Besides the Swede may hear us. He isn't any doctor at all; he doesn't look it. We're both getting jumpy, I think. It's our job to watch that Swede until Meachem comes. I wish I had a gun."

The two men became quiet staring through the aperture in the boarded window at the slow-motioned Scandinavian below. As they looked, the street lights suddenly came on, and instantly appeared as if they had been burning all the time. They burned in a long row at the base of the street of great apartment buildings. In the afternoon light they looked like dim funeral candles before some enormous altar to the dead.

VIII

FOR a while Lawrence Page watched the caretaker and the gate with the alertness natural to the situation, but presently after prolonged staring his thoughts began to wander. He wondered what the Roumanian girl was doing, and his old anxiety about her rose up again.

He shook away this thought and returned to a more concentrated watching of the street and gateway, and then, with an imperceptible drift his mind went to the man, Hevesh, and the fact that the healer was to appear before the alienist commission.

Page hoped the healer would not expose his belief to the criticism of the medical board. Indeed the faith Hevesh held at this moment inspired in Page a feeling of pathos and futility. He thought of the curious incident of the beggar to whom Hevesh had ministered, of the mystic's thought of compassion for the very disease germs as a form of life. Was such a conception beautiful, fantastic, or mad?

In his present mood Page thought it mad. It was absurd. Indeed, to attend the needs of the beggar himself in the way Hevesh did it was absurd and ridiculous. In his heart Page held the American view that unless a man was well placed financially he really did not deserve any great amount of consideration or respect. Charity, yes, a kind of casual kindness, yes, but not any actual respect and veneration such as one hypothetical immortal soul must surely arouse in another no matter at what stage of progression it might be placed.

Here the Virginian came to his surroundings again with a little start. The caretaker was still at work on the shrubs. He turned a little uneasily to Willett.

"Nobody has entered the gate?" he inquired of his companion.

Willett seemed nervous himself.

"No, but you are helping me watch aren't you?"

"Sure, sure," Page frowned, shook his head and redoubled his vigilance on the lawn below.

He had a feeling that somehow Meachem had got into the house. That was impossible, but the impression annoyed him. He began listening attentively to the big still house which was filled with the unending murmur of the city. It was like astral repetitions of the great life around it.

The reboation of a distant "elevated" was echoed like a sigh in the empty villa; a passing truck set up its whispered replica. While he listened to this vague mimicry of life, an authentic sound cut across it and immediately reduced it to silence itself. The sound seemed to be muffled voices in ordinary conversation. The reporter increased Page's shock by whispering—

"Page, don't you hear somebody talking in the basement?"

"Did any one enter the gate?" demanded the Virginian.

"Why, no; I was looking with all my eyes. I can see the caretaker still on the lawn."

Page peered out to verify this. Then on common impulse the two men began moving silently for the stairs to the basement.

"How could they have got in?" whispered the Virginian.

"We were both watching."

"Dreaming, too," growled Page, *sotto voce*, "but, —— it, a whole crowd of men couldn't have slipped in under our eyes."

"It does sound like a crowd."

By this time the two companions were at the head of the basement steps and they heard the sound of ordinary conversation coming up from the chamber below. It was not guarded in the least. The overtones were grave, but natural and devoid of all excitement. For a group of men suddenly to appear beneath him while he watched for them shook at Page's nerves.

"Had we better rush the door?" asked Page in a whisper.

"I don't think so," demurred the reporter. "This sounds like an ordinary clinic of doctors. We don't want to make ourselves ridiculous."

"No," agreed Page. "I believe I'll knock."

"I believe I would," agreed Willett a little uncertainly.

Page put up his knuckles to knock with a feeling that at the first tap all sounds and cracks of light would vanish instantly and leave him in silence and darkness. He knocked.

At the sound the conversation did hush, but the seep of light continued and a voice said—

"Go and see who it can be, Plochman."

"The Swede, I imagine," came the reply, and a little later the door opened.

A young doctor in a white apron stood framed against the light and several others were ranged inside.

"Did you want to see any particular doctor in here?" he asked courteously.

The mere breeding in the question made Page feel ridiculous and at the same time reassured him even in such untoward surroundings.

"No, I—I didn't come after a doctor. I'd like to ask if Mr. Meachem, an editor of the Chicago *Tribune*, is in here?"

The polite young man at the door hesitated.

"Uh-yes, or, that is, he was in here."

"Has he gone home?" asked Page, wondering if the editor had both entered and gone out of the building under his very eyes.

"Are you a relative of Mr. Meachem?" asked the young doctor in the peculiar muted tone men use when they must break disagreeable news.

At this quality in his voice a sudden dismay seized Page.

"No-o—he was a friend of mine," he answered unsteadily.

"Now, now, compose yourself," soothed the doorkeeper. He turned and called inside in a low tone:

"Dr. Zorianof, will you prepare a swallow of spirits of ammonia for this gentleman. He is a friend of our patient."

An annoyed voice with a foreign accent inquired—

"How come him here?"

"That is hardly our concern under the circumstances."

A trembling set up in Page, so that he could hardly speak.

"Is Meachem dead?" he asked in a shaken voice.

"Unfortunately he died under an operation for intestinal cancer," soothed the physician. He turned to receive a glass.

"Here is the ammonia; you will feel better if you will sip it."

Willett's voice broke into this queer colloquy.

"Gentlemen," he stated with a reporter's crispness, "I work for the *Tribune*. Page and I believe Mr. Meachem's death was intentional. We believe you doctors deliberately ended his life while making a scientific investigation of death."

The reporter entered the room and Page followed him with the glass of ammonia water in his hand.

"Making what?" demanded a grizzled old doctor with shrewd gray eyes.

There were four white-aproned figures in the room and on the table Page saw the form of a man under a sheet.

The immobility of the sheeted figure told its own tale. Willett went on with a certain challenging note in his voice—

"Which one of you men is Dr. Nathan O. Person?"

"Young man," said the old doctor, "your stars are with you. If you had interrupted an operation here two weeks ago, you wouldn't have got out easily."

"Are you Dr. Person?"

"There is no Dr. Person in Chicago," replied the elderly physician. "That name was chosen after a very careful search of the directories to make sure no physician would be injured by adverse publicity."

"Then whom does the name Dr. Nathan O. Person represent?"

"The medical administration in Chicago."

"All of the doctors?"

"Nearly all of us. A few are neutral."

"Are you banded together to kill men?" asked Page with horrified eyes.

"My dear sir, you put it very crudely," replied the old doctor. "We are associated together for the advancement of the human race. Our body has inaugurated a movement of removing the hopelessly unfit among men both mental and physical. We are simply restoring through medical coöperation the ancient law of the survival of the fittest which brought our race up to its highest standards of excellence."

The young physician who had been so courteous to Page interposed in a more sympathetic voice.

"We don't want to seem to argue with you in your grief, Mr. Page. But heretofore the sole object of the medical profession has been to save lives. As it grew more and more scientific and proficient, there has naturally been a reciprocal weakening of the human race because the ineffectives survived. Do you know that the mental development of the average American citizen as reported by the Binet tests is that of a twelve-year-old child. Unrestrained sanitation, hygienic measures and scientific medical aid has caused this."

The young man shrugged and spread his hands.

"But we can't do away with these blessings for the sake of destroying the weak and the unsound among us. A man doesn't burn down his house to destroy the rats."

"But Meachem wasn't a rat!" cried Page glancing at the figure on the table.

"That is true," agreed the old doctor in a different tone. "Meachem has been an ardent advocate of birth control and euthanasia for years. A recent examination showed that he had an incipient growth in his stomach. He believed by voluntarily submitting himself to our program he could do more to popularize it than he could by his writings. That seems to be the only way to reach the public mind, Mr. Page, through the shock of emotion. At present the thinking power of humanity is negligible, although we hope that under our régime it will recuperate."

Willett interrupted to ask—

"How did you get Meachem into this building when both Page and I were watching for him?"

"The Board of Health bought this place and had an extension of the Chicago freight subway system dug under it. We bring our patients here on freight cars and take them out the same way. We thought it would be best to keep the matter quiet until the public became educated to the idea. Have you any further questions?"

"Has any other reporter got this story?"

"Not yet."

"Will you hold it for me two hours?" asked Willett in an excited voice.

The grizzled doctor smiled.

"Your beat is safe with us, sir."

The reporter turned toward the door—

"Come on, Page!" he cried and hurried outside. As he went he ejaculated: "What a beat! What a scream!"

On the lawn, he sprinted and jumped the iron gate of the villa cleanly in order to hail a passing cab.

Page rushed after Willett like the tail after a comet. In the cab the reporter began developing the ideas connoted by this medical action.

"It's the turning point in the history of mankind, Page!" he cried. "The human race will begin climbing again. And here is the greatest thing. It marks another change in the governors of men."

"What do you mean?" queried Page.

"You know the human race was first governed by the priest. Then priestly power gave way to the warrior. With the curbing of armies the lawyer began to rule the people. Then arose big business, and millionaires made a tool of the lawyers. Today, for the first time in the history of the world, doctors and scientific men will take the reins of power. Their object is different from all the others. The priest thought of a future life; the warrior, power; the lawyer, fame; the plutocrat, more wealth. But the doctors will seek to improve the race. Today is the beginning of the millennium."

"To what end will they improve the race?" asked Page in a gray mood.

"Why, my ——, to make it more efficient, more energetic, more brilliant."

"But efficient for what," complained Page in a sort of mental distress, "to build higher skyscrapers, faster aeroplanes. It always seems to me that life is for something, that it's getting on toward some goal. I don't know—Meachem was a lovable fellow."

"He made a splendid sacrifice, Page. He'll go down in history."

"I don't think I would care for a world

with everybody in it sound and healthy and efficient and—heartless."

"Come now, you're thinking of the doctors—doctors aren't heartless when they cut off a man's leg to save his life."

Page rode a little farther in silence and then said he wanted out. Willett asked him to stay on until they reached the *Tribune* office, but the Southerner was decided.

The chauffeur slowed down sufficiently for the disaffected Southerner to jump from the running board. Page hit the pavement, took several long steps and caught his balance. He found himself in the tenement district again. As he passed under a street light he heard a voice shout:

"Look! Yonder's one dem stool pigeons now! Le's git him!"

The Virginian made out a gang of boys and men running toward him. He turned a corner sharply, made a zigzag run around several blocks and came out the mouth of a dark alley. He reconnoitered the spots of lamp-light which checkered the street and suddenly recognized he was on Water Street. He knew Vita Orloff lived about three blocks distant and was suddenly filled with an almost compulsive desire to see her again. He wanted to tell her the strange tragedy which had befallen his friend Meachem. He did not know why he wanted to tell the girl this. He doubted whether she could understand his feelings, his shock, his desolation at this moon-struck murder of his friend.

He went on toward her, using the most shadowed parts of the street for security. He felt that to be with the girl would ease the ache of life.

As he turned across the street to enter the towering tenement, he heard the call of a newsie in the distance.

"Extry! Extry! Doctors League Against Babies! Death Penalty for Invalids! Sickness a Crime!"

"Willett's turned loose his story," thought Page, and he entered the tenement.

IX

LAWRENCE PAGE sought the rooms of Vita Orloff, bruised and bewildered by the tragedy he had just witnessed. He knew he would not be able to discuss this new and appaling situation with the girl. She would be quite devoid of ideas upon the subject, but with that queer receptivity possessed by the stupidest of women in love, her mood would follow his, calm and reinforce his thoughts—he didn't know how.

The hunchback who operated the elevator growled out at Page the word, "stool pigeon," but the Virginian scarcely noted this in his nervous urgency to be with the Roumanian girl. He got off the lift and set out through the dimly lighted corridors to her room.

He was some yards from her door when the shutter swung open and the girl herself stood looking at him. She gave a little cry at seeing him.

"You've come! I was afraid something had happened to you— Did anything happen to you?"

When he came closer she lifted her arms to him with such natural anxiety and endearment that Page scarcely realized the unusualness of the embrace.

"Nothing at all has happened to me," he answered in perfect sincerity. "Why did you think so?"

"I don't know. I had a feeling you were in danger."

She walked with him, and they sat down together on an old couch. Then Page recalled the incident of the court-house and told it to her in the briefest of sentences—

"They did throw me down the court-house stairs."

"Were you hurt?"

She drew him to her, looking at him anxiously.

The Virginian let himself drift in the balm of her sympathy.

"No, I wasn't hurt. I knocked one of the men down."

"They killed Meachem," he went on without preliminary explanation. "That clinic has been deliberately murdering babies, helpless old people, the weak-minded—"

She nodded with her face against his.

"Yes, I know. The Bebbs think you helped kill their baby. I told them you didn't."

"I suppose I did in a way—I didn't mean to."

"Yes, I told them that."

Page closed his eyes in a deep peace. Vita Orloff not only did not think herself, she allayed thought in others. She was a poultice to Page's mind; an easement to his interminable theorizing about life and truth and morals. In the girl's presence all these things now drew away from Page and became inconsequential to him. The particular problem posed by the doctors which had so disturbed him became a remote matter.

"I don't know," he speculated out of his reverie. "They may help improve the race."

"No, they won't help at all," murmured the girl.

"Why?"

"They just won't."

Page opened his eyes a trifle at the cogency of these replies. He wondered if she knew what she was answering—what he was thinking about. Her face was so close to his own that he could see only an enormous black eye obscuring the whole ceiling of the room.

"Won't what, Vita?" he asked tentatively.

"Won't make folks better off to kill the old. It makes us worse. We won't have anybody to love or work for."

Page nodded in the comfort of her embrace.

"That's a point," he thought, "that's what I should have told Willett."

Page marveled how simply and easily Vita had said it. It had required no mental exertion whatever. She simply knew. And Page thought:

"She knew it because she is constructed physically and psychically to bear and protect little weak babies. She knows instinctively the profound need of the strong for the weak. Why, that's about the wisest thing that will ever be said on the subject, he mused." Her reply came rather out of her body than her brain.

The Virginian stroked her work-hardened hand and, moved by the girl's genius for disconnection, began thinking of something else. He thought of Hevesh and hoped the healer would be discreet at the sanity proceedings. There was grave enough reason for him to be now.

The girl said—

"Father Hevesh came to see me today."

"Is that so?" ejaculated the Virginian, a little surprized. Then he reflected that the healer no doubt would continue his parish calls as long as he had liberty. "Did he speak of his trial?"

"Oh, no; he only came in to ask me to look and see what time it was."

"Came clear up to your flat to ask the time of day?"

"Yes, and he told me to mention it to you if you called."

"Mention the time of day to me?"

"That's what I understood him to mean."

"Queer thing—what time did he call?"

"Twelve minutes after eight."

The Virginian pondered this message.

"I suppose you must have been mistaken in what he said to you—you are positive he mentioned my name?"

"Certainly I am," stated Vita, whose cowlike mind never deserted facts for fancy. "There was another gentleman with him. I thought they were both looking for you, but they didn't say they were."

"Who was the other man?"

"I never saw him before. I think he was one of the father's patients. He had a terrible cancer in his stomach. He was so ill from it."

"Hevesh didn't call his name?"

"No, they were talking between themselves. The man with the cancer paid no attention to me at all. He was too sick and weak."

Here Page caught an idea of what Hevesh wanted. He had hoped Page would be a witness at the coming trial to prove Hevesh's occult powers in healing cancers. The other man was no doubt the beggar Page had seen.

"Was he a beggar, Vita?"

"Oh, no-o," negatived the girl strongly as if the suggestion put off some sort of slight on the stranger. "He was a very nice man with gray, pin-striped trousers, very neat. He had a sad face but very nice."

Page wondered who the fellow could have been, evidently one of the better class. And there was a certain familiar hint even in Vita's imperfect description.

"You are sure the sick man didn't ask for me?"

"Oh no, he seemed too dazed. He kept looking at his cancer and saying, 'This terrible sore! Oh, this terrible sore! I didn't know I had such a dreadful disease.' "

Page looked up curiously at the girl.

"How is that? A man with a cancer surprized at it—didn't know he had it?"

"I think the clinic doctors made it worse," explained Vita. "I think they used acid on it."

"Ugh!" cried Page. "What gave you such a notion?"

"Because Father Hevesh looked at the place and shook his head and said, "I can do nothing for you as we are now, brother. It was just beginning to work itself out into your flesh when the doctors asphyxiated you."

A shock went through Page's spine at the words. He sat upright.

"The doctors did what?"

"Asphyxiated him."

"They asphyxiated him!"

"Yes!" The girl hesitated, frightened at her lover's dawning horror. "That's what he said. What is there to that?"

"Do you know what the word asphyxiate means?"

"I thought it meant the doctors poured some sort of acid on the sore. They must have made it worse very quickly."

"Why no, it means—it means—why, my God, I don't know what it can mean there—asphyxiate—asphyxiate—you are sure that's the word, Vita, that Hevesh used?"

"Oh, yes, I remember distinctly."

Page stared at the girl with his thoughts moving in blind alleys.

"What did this sick man look like? Describe him as exactly as you can."

"Well—he was a smallish man with a sad, pale face. He held Hevesh's hand all the time."

"How did you know he had a cancer on his stomach?"

"Why, I saw it."

"On his stomach—didn't he wear clothes?"

The girl paused beginning to be confused herself—

"Oh, yes, he had on clothes, and they were on him in the usual way, but I know he had a cancer too, I saw it— I don't understand it."

"I suppose it was some arrangement," mused Page, "by which Hevesh could massage the place. But that word asphyxiate—"

"What does it mean?" asked Vita.

"To smother, to kill by smothering. If the doctors had killed him by smothering, he couldn't have been walking around with Hevesh. Let me see, what did Hevesh say to the man?"

" 'I can do nothing for you as we are now. It was just beginning to work itself out into your flesh when the doctors asphyxiated you.' "

As Page looked at the girl, and heard her repeat these strange words, an idea, a possibility formed in his mind filling him almost with a sense of physical shock.

He leaned toward the girl abruptly and caught her hand.

"Listen," he said. "Did the man have brown eyes?"

"Yes."

"And—a little scar over his lip?"

"Yes."

The Virginian went on breathlessly with every detail he could recall and the girl catching the excitement breathed a succession of "Yes, yes, yesses."

"Why, my God!" breathed Page. "It couldn't have been Meachem! His apparition couldn't have come here! With Hevesh!"

The Virginian's murmurings sank into agitated thought. There were endless records of apparitions in the annals of psychological societies. Vita Orloff might have received some clairvoyant impression at the moment of Meachem's death. There was some way to explain these things mechanically. The psychologists did it. These apparitions were really nothing at all, subjective phenomena, Vita's imagination fired by some sort of mental telepathy at Meachem's death. He couldn't remember the details of the theory, but it was something like that, and he believed it. And Vita had had one of these illusions. There had been nothing real about it. But there was Hevesh and his queer message to Page himself, "twelve minutes after eight." Which meant nothing at all.

And suddenly Page jumped at an explanation which he did understand, for it was his own. Hevesh had come to this room and hypnotized Vita. All this was the charlatan's play for confusion.

At this point Page's soliloquy was interrupted by heavy steps coming through the corridor. Man and girl both lifted their heads to listen. A moment later came a thumping at the door and a thick voice called:

"Vita Orloff! Vita Orloff! Is that —— stool pigeon, Page, in there!"

Page sprang up, meaning to defend himself, but the girl motioned him back sharply and ran to the door herself.

"No, he isn't, Mr. Bebb!" she called through the panel.

"You're sure he's not?"

"Of course I'm sure. I—I was waiting for him myself. If—if he comes will you tell him to come here?"

"You don't want him here, the ——

scoundrel. Look at this paper! Look what it says. The doctors did kill my baby. They're raisin' ——. Ever'body's raisin' ——. I want to ketch Page. He's the man—"

The steps turned and went clumping off through the corridor. The girl turned and looked at her lover stolidly.

"You'd better slip out and get away. That elevator man doesn't like you. He'll send Bebb back here again."

"What's he got against me?" ejaculated Page in surprize.

"Well—he's got a crush on me, the poor little humpback. You must go."

Page stepped out of the door into the endless corridors. Vita piloted him rapidly this and that way till they came to a fire-escape at the end of a hall. They climbed out on the frail thing in the cold night air.

"They'll never guess we've gone down this," she whispered, and began the endless descent.

In the outer air the lovers looked down and saw the whole tenement district in a tumult. Shouts, screams, cries for vengeance roared up to them through the cañon of the street. The myriad dwellers in the slums passed far beneath them under the electric lights like some sort of wild ragged army bent on destruction. In the confusion Page could hear:

"Down with the doctors! Kill the doctors!"

The noise of the rioting spread and spread until it seemed to encompass the city. Tongues of fire began to lift themselves above the immensely high skyline. Suddenly Vita caught the Virginian's arm and pointed—

"Look yonder! Something's afire in the Loop! Oh, my God, they've set fire to a skyscraper in the Loop!"

A vast red glare lifted itself against the night, stood poised for perhaps half a minute and then fell back into darkness again. Page stared at the unaccountable illumination for several minutes and then a ponderous rumbling ground on his ears. He clutched the girl's arm.

"They blew one of them up with T. N. T.!" he shivered in a gray voice.

The two ran on down the fire escape; one endless story after another. The repetition of his labor set Page's thoughts flying again:

Suppose human life were a day's march in the journey of the soul, then how cogent would be the kindliness and sympathy which every human being feels for another. If this soul stuff came up through animals into men and passed into something higher, that would explain why for thousands of years man's instinctive healing efforts have been devoted to the sick no matter how worthless these patients might be. According to this idea, the greatness of a civilization would be measured by the number of the poor and the weak it could support. Perhaps the ills of the flesh were in reality the curses of the souls as the mystics in all ages have claimed. Page didn't know.

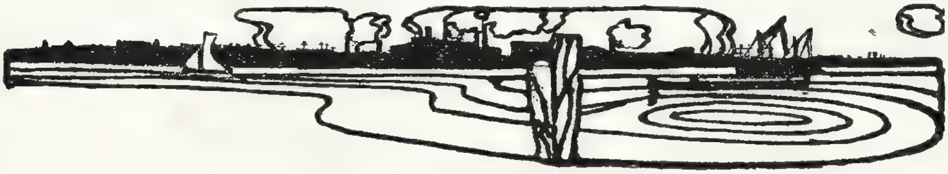
When Page reached the street he picked up a stray newspaper which the gale from the lake blew around his legs. It was a *Tribune*. He caught the headlines:

Doctors Will Improve Human Race! Revive Ancient Rule of Survival of the Fittest. Henry M. Meachem First Voluntary Sacrifice in Humanity's Great Upward Step. Program Heartily Endorsed by Press and Pulpit. America Destined to Become Nation of Savants and Specialists. Human Life Will Be Indefinitely Prolonged. Dr. Strachan Outlines Wide Program.

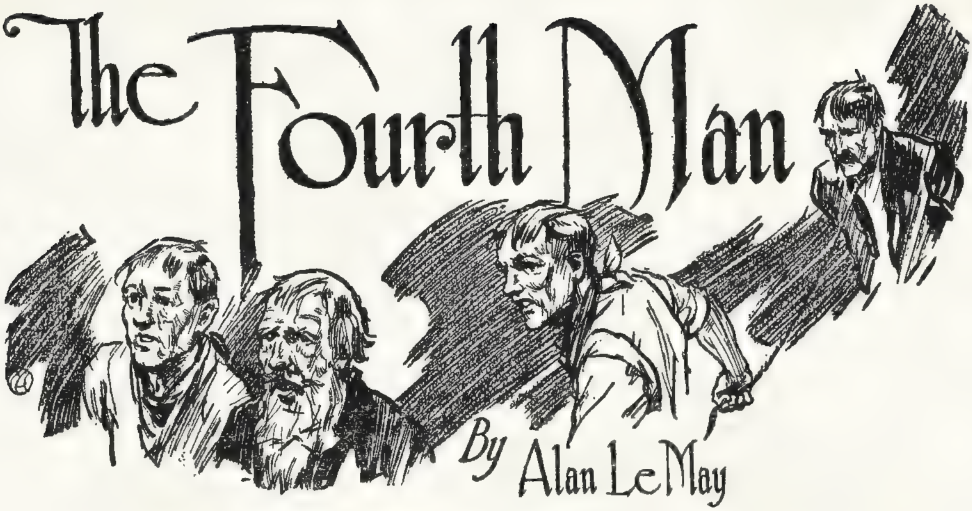
On the fourth page jammed under a long editorial written by the ill-fated Mr. Meachem was a little three-line news item:

At the Hospital of the Good Shepherd a so-called healer, Immanuel Hevesh, succumbed to an operation to relieve a tumor on his brain.

Mr. Hevesh died at twelve minutes after eight o'clock.



The Fourth Man



By Alan LeMay

Author of "Strange Fellers," "Whack-Ear's Pup," etc.

"I AIN'T to be discouraged by no such a small thing," averred "Whiskers" Beck, the aged, white-bearded patriarch of the Triangle R cow-punchers. "I've set my mind on goin' to this Bar C dance an' gen'ral shindy in soo-preme comfort an' style. An' I aim to do so."

"Not disputin' with yuh," said "Squirty" Wallace, the wiry little top hand, "that it would be real comfortin' for you an' me an' Dixie to play stud in the back of the chuck wagon while somebody else drives, I'm afeard the deal is off. That —— flunky says he won't drive for us for no consideration. An' just to make sure we wouldn't make him, he's went to work an' rode off, leavin' us flat."

"Think o' havin' a low, suspicious attitude like that," Whiskers marveled. "He musta read my mind. But I ain't beat yet. Now, if you two boys would jest take turns drivin' the team, neither one would have to drive hardly half the way. An' meantime, the other two of us could be playin' cards, plumb peaceful an' free o' dust. That's my idee of a real—"

"Well, not much!" declared "Dixie" Kane, the young bronc peeler. "An' I should think not! Me an' Squirty does the drivin' an' collects up all the dust six horses can kick up the while you sets all pretty under canvas, huh? Well, me, I'll just fork the one horse."

"Me too," agreed Squirty Wallace. "We may get a few shovels o' dust sifted down the back of our neck, but we won't get the whole Loop Hole Road throwed in our face by the bucket!"

Whiskers Beck rolled mournful eyes at the log buildings of the Triangle R home camp.

"Well," said he, "I got one plan left. I sure ain't honin' to be jiggled into a heavy sweat over twenty miles o' road. I'd druther use brains. Now how's this? We'll take the old spring buckboard. We'll hook on that team o' bays, jest the two hosses. The buckboard is so light that they won't have no trouble, not even in Dead Woman's Pass. Soon's we get that team started down the road, we'll jest forget about 'em. No one will need to drive. That team is as good at holdin' the road as any I ever see. Step along purty, too. Bet it won't take 'em two hours fer the twenty mile."

"How'll a buckboard keep us out o' the dust?" Squirty wanted to know.

"We'll rig up one o' those old tents we used in that Cork Mountain camp that time. Soon's we get the team headed down the road, we'll lash the flies shut, an' there we'll be inside, with our lantern an' our cool drinks an' a deck o' cards an' the back end open for fresh air an'—"

"Darn if that don't sound purty good," admitted Dixie Kane.

"Looks like every time the team takes a notion to stop an' eat, we'll have to unlash the flies," objected Squirty, running a hand through his rusty hair. " 'T that rate we'd get to the Bar C along about the early part o' September."

"Aw, poo-bah," scoffed Whiskers. "I can crack the side o' the tent with my quirt, so's it's the livin', spittin' imitation of a whip crackin'. I can even imitate the w'istle o' the lash, like this, *Swrreet—pop!* That'll make any cayuse spraddle out an' get a move on!"

Squirty Wallace's thoughtfully wrinkled face relaxed into a grin.

"—— if I don't think you've got the right idee!" he conceded at last. "This cow country has gone on too long 'thout the comforts an' refinements o' home. What's the use o' bein' us if yuh can't do nothin'?"

"That's what I say," agreed Whiskers heartily. "An' leave me tell yuh somethin' else." He drew them confidentially about him. "It's goin' to rain."

"Blah," said Squirty, "you make me sick. I dunno if I want to go ridin' with a crazy man or not!"

"I wisht it would rain," declared Dixie Kane whole-heartedly.

"Ain't that original?" Squirty burst into laughter. "Oncommon. The only folks that has thought that previous, up to the time you suggested it, was all the cattlemen an' all the hands an' all the saddle stock an' one hun'erd per cent o' the critters an' most o' the picket pins an' all o' the—"

"I wisht it would rain in sheets," pursued Dixie. "Just downright pour. I'm sick o' wadin' knee deep in dust, everywhere. The wet cows gives dust for milk. The steers has to walk with they heads throwed back to keep from walkin' on they tongues. I wisht it would rain ontil—"

"Take a look over the shoulder o' Mount Saleratus to the west there," urged Whiskers. "What do yuh see?"

"Nothin'," said the two punchers in chorus.

"Rain," declared Whiskers, squinting his old blue eyes into the west. "Not more'n two hundred miles off, an' comin' to beat the cards!"

"Whiskers is gettin' old," said Squirty to Dixie confidentially. "Beginnin' to show it, too."

"I'll jest lay yuh even money—" began Whiskers.

The cook's horn brought the dispute to an abrupt end.

THE clear, dry twilight, almost as light as midday, but without the glare of the direct sun, was upon them as they got their odd vehicle under way. It was seven o'clock in the evening; already many of the cowboys had ridden out, resplendent in the best clothes they could muster, on their way to the dance at the Bar C. An unexpected amount of work involved in the construction of their special car had delayed the three inventors. But they were well pleased with their work and confident of arriving at the Bar C by nine o'clock.

Unlimited ingenuity combined with a minimum amount of labor had gone into the construction of the "parlor cyar" designed by Whiskers Beck. Poles of various uneven lengths had been lashed together in a frame work adapted to support the grayed canvas of the tent. Due to the stretchy quality of its rope trusses, this superstructure swayed slightly; but, nonetheless, it at once showed itself to be surprizingly road-worthy on the whole.

Within, several war bags stuffed with blankets and other blankets spread on the floor of the buckboard provided couches where the three might recline as they played.

A lantern, well anchored, was suspended midway between floor boards and ridge pole to provide light as needed. A bucket, half full of sloshing water, acted as a refrigerator for several bottles; for, as Whiskers pointed out, "in this country a snake may r'ar up an' bite a man any minute," and they wished to be prepared for any contingency. No comfort was lacking; and, if the buckboard was somewhat jouncy and teetery of movement, at least it in no way simulated the harsh pounding encountered in the saddle of a trotting horse.

A few belated punchers swept past on their mounts, raking them with jeers, ribaldry and mocking laughter. But the three, reclining in dustless comfort, grinned with the satisfaction of men who enjoy the fruit of their brains and know when they are well off.

The reins, entering their moving tent through a crack beneath the tight-lashed forward flies, pulsated slightly with the jogging movement of the invisible horses. The reins showed a slight tendency to sneak away through the crack, and Whiskers, after some thought, finally tied them about his right leg. By seven thirty the dusk had deepened materially, and they lighted the lantern and had a drink.

Dixie Kane, settling back on the blankets to examine the cards that Squirty had dealt them, heaved a huge sigh of contentment.

"When I think," said he, "o' the rest o' the boys, painfully poundin' leather in the heat an' dust in a desper'te effort to get where they're goin', I could pretty near cry!"

"Yeah," said Squirty. "Ain't it painful t'watch the pit'able struggles of the ignor'nt."

"Only one thing is lackin' to make m'happiness complete," said Dixie. "I wisht it would rain!"

"You jest keep on wishin'," said Whiskers, "an' mebbe, so you'll get your boots rained full yet tonight!"

Another half hour passed—a half hour of luxury, peace, and restful, if somewhat joggly, locomotion.

SQUIRTY WALLACE was dealing a particularly interesting hand of stud poker. Dixie Kane, with aces, back to back, on the first round, calmly drew out a ten dollar bill, and dropped it in the middle of the triangle they formed on the bouncing floor of the buckboard. Ordinarily he would not have dared spoil a good hand by such a high initial bet; but Squirty and Whiskers both had deuces showing, and deuces were wild.

Solemnly, with sarcastic remarks about ten dollar bets made "under the gun," the other two matched Dixie's ten dollars in kind. Three more cards were dealt. Dixie drew a king, Whiskers a second deuce.

"Boys," said Squirty, "somethin' tells me I got the winnin' hand right here in this deck."

Slowly he drew the top card off, very deliberately began to turn it over—

Poof! That vicious first puff of wind clapped into the traveling tent with almost the force of an explosion. A swirl of dust came with it, leaping into their eyes, and the lantern trembled, flickered and all but died. In the failing light, through the whirl of dust, they saw three hands of cards take wings and fly out of the wagon.

"——," quoth Squirty, "there goes the three best hands— My ——! The tens went with 'em!"

Frantically they searched the tent. The currency was nowhere.

"Dixie! Quick!" yelled Squirty Wallace. He sprang for the opening at the back just as the team leaped ahead, startled by the commotion. Squirty, his footing jerked out from under him, took a gigantic plunging step into space and landed prone in the dust with a mighty *plop*.

"Stop the wagon!" howled Dixie Kane.

"Whoa!" yelled Whiskers, hauling desperately upon the reins.

Dixie Kane, hastening after, tripped over a rope, and Squirty was consoled by a second *whop* in the dust, that told him that Dixie had followed suit. Together they scrambled up and dashed, cursing, back along the dusty road.

A sullen darkness had descended with ominous swiftness. The air seemed darker than the land, giving the rough landscape that they had entered a singular ghostly appearance. Great swirling dust devils, revolving, solid-looking columns twenty feet tall raced along the road, looking like pale, phosphorescent spectres. One of these plunged upon them as if to seize the hurrying men, and for an instant they were lost in a blinding, choking swirl.

Nothing was to be seen of cards or greenbacks. Even as they frantically peered this way and that the darkness thickened until they could no longer see each other. The rushing dust devils, too, disappeared; but the men could hear them howling and hissing about them with a noise like the rushing of a myriad ghostly feet on sand. The wind now began to howl among the scraggly pine of the foothills they were traversing.

"Back to the wagon, Dixie!" yelled Squirty. "Them moneys is plumb relapsed into memory!" Then, as no answer came, "Dixie! Dixie! Where are yuh?"

No answer. Squirty turned and dashed for the covered wagon. The horses started with a jerk as Squirty tumbled in.

"Where's Dixie?" demanded Whiskers.

"I dunno!" yelled Squirty above the mounting voice of the wind. "Wait! Stop! Hold on!"

Whiskers somehow brought the nervous team to a stop. Both together, they hallooed long and loud. It seemed to them that the wind would not possibly let their voices travel beyond the walls of their swaying, wind-racked tent; but, after a moment, a faint answering hail was heard. It came from ahead, far down the road.

In a moment or two Dixie arrived and tumbled in among them.

"I guess I run past, when I made for this here parlor cyar," he explained sheepishly.

The team hurried on as Whiskers relaxed the reins. Great thudding drops began to batter down upon the walls of the tent, singly and distinctly at first, each drop a separate blow, and, then in an increasing volley that swept into a crescendo roar, filling the lurching tent with dizzy sound. A mighty thunderbolt crashed to the earth, illuminating the walls of canvas with a blaze of white light. They could feel the shock, and an acrid smell of sulphur filled the tent.

"Gosh," said Dixie Kane. "Be they shootin' at us, or was that just plain careless?"

The whirling growl of raindrops now was varied with the impact of heavy water, bucketfuls at a time. The rain was literally coming down in sheets. Another terrific crash of thunder, the impact of sound coming simultaneously with the blazing white flash, struck the earth near them; then another, and another, until the lightning was so continuous that a man could have read a newspaper by its glare if any one could have felt like reading in the terrific bedlam of screaming wind and mountain-smashing thunder.

A rope had given way, so that one side of the tent sagged; the pocket of canvas at once filled with water, tubfuls of it. Suddenly, just as the thunder roared again, the canvas split, drenching Dixie Kane with the full volume of water and whipping cupfuls of cold rain into the faces of the other two. A damp, hysterical spluttering of oaths came from Dixie as he emerged from his first paralyzed assumption that he had been struck by lightning.

"Dixie wished it would rain," said Squirty Wallace.

The racking, swaying buckboard, plunging along behind the frightened, galloping horses, was now traversing the narrow road leading through the rough country of Dead Woman's Pass. The canvas circumscribed their vision, but the downward dives and brief, almost perpendicular, climbs told them that they were traveling over tricky ground at a breakneck pace.

"Ain't—the lantern—holdin' out—good?" yelled Whiskers in brief breaks in the thunder.

As he spoke a terrific screech of wind burst through the rent canvas, puffing out the kerosene firefly and wrenching it from its moorings. Dixie Kane seemed to be the leading goat this night for it was upon Dixie's hat that the flailing lantern smashed. Thereafter, for the remainder of the night all who came close to Dixie noticed a strong odor of kerosene.

"Who done that?" they heard the bronc peeler demanding in a dazed, aggrieved voice.

A lurch of the wagon flung Squirty upon Whiskers.

"Looks like rain," he shouted into Whiskers' ear.

"—— if it don't," Whiskers returned. Then, "I shouldn't o' reminded Ol' Master about that lantern. He shore took me up!"

A SMOTHER of ropes and canvas swept down to muffle his words. For half a minute the three punchers fought to free themselves from the drowning tangle of wet canvas, blankets, ropes, arms and legs. The tent had given it up. The buckboard wrenched and hurtled, flinging them this way and that as they struggled to win free of the all-enveloping wreckage. More than one set of knuckles received a tattoo of blows from the whizzing spokes of the wheels.

Then, just as suddenly as the canvas had descended, another crescendo blast of the incessant wind plucked it away, sending the tent whistling and whirling into the unknown. It was now revealed to them that they were racing drunkenly along a dangerous part of the road. On their left the mountain climbed vertically above them, a steep of forest, tangled brush and jutting ledges. On their right the world fell away abruptly into the valley, so that a pebble flipped from the buckboard would have fallen into the tops of tall pines below.

All this they learned in one blinding, crashing flash of lightning, in which they saw the thrashing tree-tops dimly through rain thicker than fog; and, for an instant, they glimpsed a pair of blankets, winging across the valley, flapping madly, like great, crazy crows.

The full force of the wind was now upon them, almost tearing the men off the buckboard. Whiskers swore afterward that the buckboard was sailing like a kite behind the stampeding horses; it touched the ground, he said, only four times in three miles to his positive knowledge.

The rain was now pouring down upon

them so solidly that it was difficult for them to catch their breath. Frantically they clutched at cracks in the flooring to hold themselves on with one hand each; each cupped his other hand over his nose and mouth, that he might gulp a little of the drowning air. Their hats went and the handkerchief from around Whiskers' neck. Dixie Kane's shirt cracked down the back with the force of the wind, and the rags fluttered and snapped about him, gesticulating in a mad dance.

"How heavy the dew is tonight," gasped Squirty Wallace, but the water drowned his voice.

The buckboard was now plunging down grade at a terrific rate, and Whiskers, taking his hand from his nose, clutched the reins in a heroic effort to hold the horses back. His labor steadied the team somewhat, but could not check their speed.

A steep incline rose ahead of them. At that moment a series of lightning flashes blazed about them, and through the sheeting rain they saw that a tree was down across the road at the top of the rise. With one accord, Dixie and Squirty seized the reins near Whiskers' hands and pulled. The team came to a sliding stop, their feet in the brush of the tree.

A few moments of utter darkness followed the series of flashes. Through the roar of the descending water they heard Whiskers yelling—

"Get out an'—lead team—unhook—lift buckboard."

Dixie leaped down from the buckboard and instantly discovered that he had leaped in the wrong place. Down and down he shot, with no ground under him, until a greasy clay bank brought his fall to an end in a harmless, scooping swoop. Before he could pick himself up, there was a hissing sound above him, and another man came rocketing down the slide, catching Dixie in the ribs with both feet as he slid to a stop. Evidently Squirty Wallace had made the same mistake.

"Catch hold my belt," yelled Squirty into Dixie's ear.

No man was more swiftly master of an unexpected situation than this bowlegged little top hand.

Dixie groped in the dark, found Squirty's belt and crawled after Squirty as the latter began struggling up the almost perpendicular ascent. Dixie now became aware that some one was hanging on to his belt. A dazed checking up of his count proved to him that there were evidently three of them involved in the climb where he had thought there were but two. Assuming that Whiskers had also negotiated the flying descent, he said nothing in complaint of the unfairly heavy drag upon him as they climbed.

Gripping roots, vines, stems of grass, anything, they clawed their way up the ascent, twisting about to dig the high heels of their boots into the face of the mountain. And eventually, half drowned, with their clothes full of sand and their boots brimming water, they reached the top.

At this point Dixie became slightly confused. As they floundered over the last overhanging edge on to the road and gained their feet, a flash of lightning revealed Whiskers standing erect in the downpour at the heads of the horses.

"How did he get there so quick?" Dixie marveled. And then, "Can there be four of us here, I wonder?"

There was no time for idle speculation nor the meticulous counting of noses. Whiskers had found a way through the débris of the fallen tree, through which the horses might be led. Squirty unhooked the buckboard, and Whiskers led the skittering, frightened horses through the blockade. Then, with superhuman efforts, Dixie and Squirty set about getting the buckboard through.

It is a curious thing, significant of the characters of these men, that not then nor at any other time did they think of turning back. The idea did not so much as occur to them. They had started for a dance; they would keep going, and get there some time.

By a gigantic labor of heaving, hauling, twisting, and shouldering, working in alternate pitchy darkness and blinding flashes of blue light, they got the buckboard through—almost. Somehow in the tangle of tree the hind wheels wedged and stuck. Whiskers was signaling frantically for haste. Abrupt they gave up getting the buckboard through by hand, and hooked the horses. Either the horses would jerk the buckboard free or they would not; they thought it worth the try.

As they hooked the horses to the buckboard Dixie thought he saw a tall figure standing motionless a little apart, spectral in the midst of the downpouring water. He shot another glance in its direction in the next flash, but it had gone.

WHISKERS now came tumbling back from the horses, heads, frantically sorting out the reins. He was yelling something in their ears:

"Waterspout— Dead Woman's Gully—flood—make it across—race for it—for ——'s sake let's go!"

His idea swept over them as a revelation. Down ahead, just before the climb through Dead Woman's Pass, lay the ravine called Dead Woman's Gully. Perhaps even now a raging torrent fifteen feet deep was boiling through the cut. Even if it were fordable at the moment, any instant might see a solid wall of water storming down the gully, smashing all before it, turning a dry wash into a foaming rapids in which nothing could live.

"Let 'er buck!" yelled Squirty, tumbling on to the buckboard any old way, Dixie after him.

Whiskers, perched just back of the horses' dripping tails, paused only to take a turn of the reins around his leg for surety, raised his quirt with a yell.

There was a diversion.

"Stick up yer hands!" roared a hard-edged voice, plainly understandable even in the steady roar of the sheeting rain. An icy wet muzzle pressed under Whiskers' ear, and another against the side of Squirty's neck. By the same flash of light that had guided the intruder's guns, they saw a long, evil face, singularly sinister in appearance in the blue light and disgustingly close to their own. They saw the water running off the stranger's mustache in streams. Then darkness, an awful moment of doubt and suspense.

The wet sounding crack they heard then must have been the cut of Whiskers' quirt upon the streaming rump of the off horse. A wrench, a leap of the buckboard under them, a crashing noise, a three-foot drop, the thunder of receding hooves, and Dixie and Squirty realized that the front wheels and axle of the buckboard had parted company with the rest. A vast blaze of white light showed them the fleeing horses; and Whiskers, sitting on the small of his back in the mud, but traveling rapidly after the horses, by virtue of the reins he had wrapped about his leg.

It showed them something else: The stranger, floundering on his back on the slippery incline of the buckboard, his guns waving at the heavens like ominous antennæ of a great insect. With one accord the two cowboys leaped upon him.

Guns went off, so close that their ears rang with the explosions; bony knees met them with jabbing blows; the butt of a revolver raked the side of Dixie's head. At one point in the struggle the lightning revealed to them that Squirty was trying to break Dixie's arm, while Dixie was flailing punches at Squirty's eye. Over and over they rolled, the three, off the buckboard on to the road, where they wallowed and sputtered, fighting in the deep mud. Then off the road and down a twenty-five foot drop into the clay bank from which they had so recently emerged.

That ended it. The cowboys had somehow managed to light on top, and the fight was knocked out of the obnoxious stranger.

"Goin' t' keep this feller—souvenir!" shouted Squirty, sticking the gun that did not get lost into his belt. "Have sheriff—make dog meat!"

They hauled the limply crawling enemy up the bluff and on to the road by the ears, as they might have dragged a bawling calf. Grimly they started down the road, their captive between them, looking for the wreck of Whiskers and the team. Thus, hurrying, they crashed into a wheel of the buckboard. In the next flash they discovered Whiskers, unhurt. He was trying to turn the team about to come after them.

Squirty Wallace now found a rope end still trailing from the axle, and he tied it in a hard loop around the captive's neck.

"Hang on to that axle or hang on the run!" was his brief advice.

Whiskers asked no questions. As soon as this was done they heard Whiskers' yell.

"Gra-a-ab the axle boys! We'll race—Dead Woman's Gully—or bust! Hiyah!"

Gripping the reins and the axle with one hand and his quirt with the other, the astonishing old man lashed at the team. Dixie and Squirty made a flying dive at the axle, and just made it as the team and the remains of the buckboard plunged down grade into the drenched dark. Dragging, floundering, sometimes gaining their feet to run a few monstrous hurtling steps before going down again, they clung to the axle.

The water poured down from above more fiercely than ever, and the lightning roared almost continuously; wind and water seemed to tear the breath from their mouths. Rocks in the leaping road beneath them beat and ripped at their knees, and in their faces splattered a ceaseless stream of mud from the horses' heels. But they hung on!

Below them the gully moaned, its floor filled already with the water from the local downfall, a rushing, swirling muddiness perhaps waist deep. But from above came an ominous, thundering roar, the accumulated water from the mountains above, coming down the gully in a solid wall. The horses heard it, and slid to a trembling stop.

"Don't try it!" shouted Squirty above the voice of the storm. "For ——'s sake hold that team!"

"We can make it!" yelled Whiskers, his quirt slashing.

The trembling horses, their ribs heaving, their eyes starting from their heads, shrank from the punishing lash; yet hesitated for an instant with hunched backs and downstretched noses on the brink of the gully. Then they plunged into the water below. Thrashing, struggling, half drowned, the horses plunging ahead in a wild panic, they fought their way toward the opposite bank.

It seemed to Dixie Kane that he had never seen a gully so interminably wide before. Half dragged, half floated, almost torn away by the rush of the current, the men clung to that slender axle.

"We've made it!" shouted Whiskers hoarsely.

Just then the diapasons of the storm suddenly swelled to a terrific roar, multiplied and multiplied again as if an ocean were catapulting upon them. With their powerful backs straining with the fear of death, their flying hooves gashing the slippery bank, the team went up the wall of the gulch like squirrels. A mighty weight of water, its front a heaving wall almost triple the height of a man, hurled itself down the gully in a deafening tumult.

The crest of the wave struck Dixie Kane's trailing leg with an impact as solid as that of a club, and the grip of the water wrenched away his boot. The horses rushed on up the grade beyond danger; and one by one the men dropped off, to lie gasping for air. All except the stranger who, because of the rope about his neck, was still in hazard of being summarily "hung on the run." The team, freed of the deadly, dragging weight, staggered to a level bit of ground and stopped.

The men looked back and, by the blue flare of the lightning, saw thirty feet of the bank they had left collapse into the seething flood in the gulch. From wall to wall the draw was filled with a bulging wrath of water in which nothing could live. They saw a great hundred-and-twenty-foot pine, its roots heaving skyward like clutching, imploring hands, swept tumbling down the torrent, as helpless in the teeth of the flood as a bit of shingle, or a man.

INSIDE the big new barn of the Bar C festivities had been proceeding undampened by the storm. Decorations were few, but there was plenty of kerosene light, and the crowd on the floor, while comprised chiefly of men, was colorful enough to make up.

Enthroned in a manger rack in one corner was the orchestra. It consisted of a fiddle, played with spirit by a little, bald old man with a nut-cracker face; a rather small accordian, energetically wheezed by a red-nosed miner with an oversized mustache; a huge banjo, thrummed mightily by a tousled, black-headed giant, bearded to the eyes; and a complete set of drums, operated with more enthusiasm than technique by a young cowboy with a copper-riveted face.

As an auxiliary to this official orchestra, a corps of volunteer mouth-organ experts, ranging in number from two to a dozen, according to whim, clustered in front of the orchestral manger, contributing their best. When the measures raced with turbulent abandon the harmonicas were operated with both hands, while their owners bent and swayed, beating time with a thunderous stamping of feet.

There was no sheet music. The little, bald old man with the fiddle led off with each piece and the others trailed in. In case some of them didn't know just what the fiddle was playing, they improvised as best they could, the strength of their instruments undaunted by any slight vagueness as to what was being played. And if there were occasional discords as a result of these misunderstandings, no one noticed them.

An uproarious atmosphere of merriment pervaded the crowd of fourscore people of plains and mountains who danced. The liberal scattering of flasks that were whipped out at the close of each dance, and the hogshead of beer that welcomed all comers in the corner, had already done a good deal toward relaxing restraint. And the advent of the desperately needed rain, bringing financial salvation to many and new life to thousands of head of stock, did the rest. With the music at its height, the men whooped and cheered, and the building shook with the rhythmic trampling of feet.

While the fewness of the women was a source of regret, it was not permitted to retard the dancing. Smooth-shaven cowboys with clicking heels and bearded miners who danced like bears reeled and whirled together in the waltz. Those who could not waltz did not hold back; and many a bearded, merry-eyed couple could be seen performing steps that appeared to be half ring-around-the-rosy and half wrestling match.

The thunder and roar of the storm outside; the insistent wail of the orchestra, bravely combatting the hammer of the downpour on the roof; the rhythmic thud of feet; the bright dresses of the women, and the untamed colors of the men's shirts and neckerchiefs; enthusiastic whoops and cowboys yells; the kaleidoscopic whirl of movement; laughing tanned faces; twinkling eyes above brushy beards, and the gay, flushed faces of girls. These things made the barn dance a bacchanale, a riot of vigorous spirit.

Big "Shocky" McCoy stepped up on to a keg to call a square dance. His powerful voice boomed clearly through the tumult of the rain, and the orchestra struck up once more at his command. A slight confusion occurred at the start, for the fiddler struck off with "Old Zip Coon," whereas the remainder of the orchestra had expected to play "Pop Goes the Weasel," and failed to note the change.

A brief, unmusical struggle ensued, each laboring musician looking at his fellows with vaguely puzzled, accusing eyes. Then the majority won, and the fiddler was dragged into "Pop Goes the Weasel" against his will. Half a dozen squares were formed, the rest of the crowd lining the sides of the floor, clapping their hands in time with the music.

Swaying his shoulders, Shocky roared the dance calls:

"Form a squar' with the four right hands, back to the left, an' ever'body swing! Alleman left, and watch yer step, an' gents all turn, an' promenayde! Face yer pardners! Jine right hands! Grab yer girl, an' ever'body swing! Quarter a whirl! Fifty cents! Seventy-five! An' a dollar a whirl, an' it's worth the whirl, whirl yer girl why doncha!"

The Spring River sheriff, a man with jovial red cheekbones and a jauntily upturned mustache, now remembered that he had forgot something. He strode to the door, the door representing the flattest available surface in a building chiefly of logs and poles, and dragged a large, damp handbill from his pocket. He also produced tacks, and proceeded to affix the black and yellow sheet to the inside of the door.

The orchestra stopped opportunely, and the sheriff seized the chance offered by the slight pause between the whoops of applause and the resuming music to make his announcement.

"Leave me call yer 'tention," he roared, "leave me call yer 'tention to this here—"

He flung up an outstretched arm to point at the poster.

At this moment the door was unlatched from the outside and, swung violently inward by the wind, it cracked the sheriff on the elbow.

"What the—" he began.

Into the room filed Whiskers Beck, Squirty Wallace and Dixie Kane. That is to say, the three that filed in knew themselves to be such. No one else recognized them. Drenched, their boots squirting water at every step, mud-colored all over, their clothing torn in shreds, the newcomers baffled identification by even their closest bunkmates. The faces of the streaming three were masked with gooey mud through which rivulets of water had carved clean streaks, giving the masks a peculiar wavy, stripy appearance. From these masks their eyes looked out like three pairs of hard-fried eggs.

One of the three appeared to have a beard, decorated tastefully with some intertwined sticks and leaves; but no one could be sure.

A HUSH fell upon the throng, broken only by the drumming of the subsiding rain on the shakes above. For a moment the fourscore stared at the three and the three stared at the fourscore. Then the leader of the three—he with the twiggy beard—pointed a thumb half over his shoulder at one of the other mud-masked figures.

"Dixie was just wishin' it would rain," he solemnly intoned.

Pandemonium broke loose. Shrieks and howls of laughter shook the roof, drowning out the sound of the rain. Punchers reeled, roaring with laughter, into each other's arms, beat their nearest friends with hard hands and sank, doubled convulsively, to the floor. Hats sailed into the air; an unsuspected gun went off, potting the roof, and an instant stream of water was admitted by the wounded shingles. The first cupful of water, with divine justice, went down the gun-toter's neck, cooling his ardor somewhat.

While this uproar was going on, the three had stood limply, without facial expression. There is no expression to mud. But suddenly he of the dripping beard set eyes upon the sheriff's posted hand bill and galvanized into life.

"You want Saragossa Pete, do yuh?" he yelled above the shrieks of the laughter-racked mob.

"Right," replied the laughing sheriff.

"Well, we got him right here!"

At this the sheriff from Spring River became swiftly sober and alert.

"What?"

"We got him! How much does that reward read?"

"Three thousand — dollars — reward!" yelled the sheriff as impressively as he could. "For mail robbery, shootin' up o' seven men, rustlin' o' cattle, robbery on the highway, blowin' o' the Hogjaw bank, settin' fire to the—"

"Well, here he is!" yelled Whiskers excitedly. "I know his pan, an' I seen it tonight by lightnin'."

He seized upon the hindmost member of the three, and hauled the bedraggled fellow forward. "This is him!"

The sheriff promptly thrust a gun into the shirtless stomach of the man thus presented. At this the news that something extraordinary was going on at the door spread over the assemblage like ripples in a pool, and all fell silent to listen and watch.

"Wait!" protested the man who confronted the sheriff's gun. "I ain't him. It's me!"

"—— if it ain't!" Whiskers admitted. "My mistake, Dixie. Reel in that rope!"

Dixie Kane, he of the missing boot, carried the end of a rope which extended out the door into the night. He now threw his weight upon it. In response to this peremptory summons a huge, shadowy figure appeared in the doorway. At first the crowd thought that a horse was being led in, but instead a fourth man, in every way like the mud-disguised three, lurched in weakly, led by the rope knotted about his neck. The arms of this latest entry were bound behind his back, and his feet were hobbled so that only short, teetering steps were possible.

In spite of these handicaps, the prisoner was seen to make a game attempt to bite through the rope that led him, an attempt that was ended by a harsh command from Dixie Kane.

The sheriff ripped off his own handkerchief, and thrust it outside into the drip of the eaves. It came back soaking wet, and he used it to get some of the worst mud off the face of the prisoner.

"It's him for sure!" he exulted. "I know by the scar over his right eye!"

While the sheriff had washed the prisoner's face, Dixie, Squirty and Whiskers had followed out the idea by rinsing and rubbing some of the thickest clay off of their own. They were now recognizable to those who knew them well.

"Well, if it ain't Whiskers!" declared the sheriff. "An' Squirty! An' Dixie Kane! All from the Triangle R. How come yuh to get this feller?"

"Well," Squirty began, "I knowed there was somethin' phoney about him soon's he stuck that gun in my ear, so we thought—"

"We went after him," Whiskers interrupted loudly, drowning Squirty out.

The sheriff swiftly shoved the reeling prisoner ahead of him into the room, his gun at the man's back. He held up his free hand to silence the general buzz of excitement.

"Listen!" he yelled, and they did. "Whiskers Beck, Squirty Wallace and Dixie Kane, all o' the Triangle R, has run down an' captured alive this here Saragossa Pete, the same feller that shot his way through three posses. They took him with the' bare hands, follerin' a long chase through this storm! Yuh can see for yourselves they ain't got guns!"

There was a moment of silence except for the steadily decreasing hum of the rain while this sunk in.

"Three thousand dollars reward is comin' to these boys," the sheriff concluded, "an' I'm gonna see that they get it!"

A great cheer went up, continuing, with

whoops and yells and leaps into the air, for many minutes. Flasks were thrust into the hands of the three, and they were mauled and thumped by many hands. Then swiftly they were swept up on to the shoulders of six brawny men. Shocky McCoy leaped on to his keg.

"All form for th' gran' march!" he bellowed.

The fiddler struck up "Hail to the Chief," and the orchestra crashed in.

The three dripping punchers from the Triangle R, each with a flask in each hand and a thousand dollars gold in prospect, were carried triumphantly at the head of the grand march on the shoulders of shouting men.

"How was the rain, Dixie?" Whiskers yelled over his shoulder.

"Rain?" Dixie Kane shouted back. "Where?"

THE BATTLE OF THE KEGS

by Arthur Woodward

ON THE fifth of January, 1778, there occurred at Philadelphia an incident which not only brought upon the heads of the British forces under Sir William Howe, then in possession of that city, a great deal of ridicule but also served to rock the thirteen United Colonies with such mirth that a song composed in commemoration of the occasion soon spread with great celerity throughout the Continental Army, was sung at all public gatherings to the tune of "Moggie Lawder."

This episode was the ridiculous Battle of the Kegs which came about when a string of kegs, fitted out by the inventive Yankee, David Bushnell, with a charge of explosive and a clockwork to fire the same, were cast adrift in the Delaware River just above the British ships at anchor off Philadelphia.

Owing to the congestion of the ice in the river the wooden mines, for such they were, failed to reach their destination in time, and began blowing up before they reached the sides of the enemy's vessels.

It is related in the *Pennsylvania Ledger*, that "a barrel of an odd appearance came floating down the Delaware, opposite the town, and attracted the attention of some boys, who went in pursuit of it, and had scarcely got possession of it, when it blew up, and either killed or injured one or more of them."

The explosion of the mined kegs greatly alarmed the British seamen, the soldiery on shore and the inhabitants of the town. Rumors spread like wild-fire through the city that the rebels had found a new way of ferrying themselves down the river and that "these kegs were filled with armed rebels, who were to issue forth in the dead of night, and take the city by surprize, asserting that they had seen the points of their bayonets through the bungholes of the kegs. Others asserted they were constructed by magic art; would, of themselves, ascend the wharves in the night time, and roll all flaming through the streets of the city, destroying everything in their way."

Be as it may, the British were taking no chances, and a cannonade from ship and shore was immediately directed at the floating barrels. As one of the verses of the song by Francis Hopkinson has it:

> The cannons roar from shore to shore,
>   The small arms make a tratle;
> Since wars began, I'm sure no man
>   Ere saw so strange a battle.

Another facetious writer of the times, speaking of the action of the British states:

"The action began about sunrise and would have been completed with great success by noon, had not an old market woman, coming down the river with provisions, unfortunately let a small keg of butter fall overboard, which as it was then ebb tide floated down upon the scene of action. At the sight of this unexpected reinforcement of the enemy, the battle was renewed with fresh fury, and the firing was incessant till evening closed the affair."

The same writer concludes his letter by saying:

"The kegs were either totally demolished, or obliged to fly, as none of them have shown their *heads* since. It is said that his Excellency, Lord Howe, has despatched a swift-sailing packet, with an account of his victory, to the court at London. In a word, Monday, the fifth of January, seventeen hundred and seventy-eight must ever be distinguished in history for the memorable battle of the kegs."

Pearls and Swine

By Rolf Bennett

Author of "The Teeth o' McClure," "The Bird of Fortune," etc.

THERE were three of us in the smoking compartment—a stout, horsey-looking man with a fat cigar in his mouth, a man who looked like a sailor and myself. The seafaring man was asleep and so, no doubt, I also should have been but for the stout man who insisted on talking. Most of the anecdotes he forced upon me related to the race-course, and I remember he ended a particularly long and tedious one with the observation that "it's no use feeding pearls to swine," referring to the person in his story who had ignored his, the stout man's advice. It was at this juncture that the seafaring man woke up, blinked and looked about him.

"What's that about pearls?" he demanded.

The stout man repeated his observation as to the inadvisability of endeavoring to feed pearls to swine.

"A feller who did that," remarked the seafaring man, "ought to be put under hatches before he got dangerous. But talking of pearls, did either of you gents ever hear tell of a Captain James Birch?"

Neither of us ever had, and this seemed rather to disappoint the seafaring man.

"Well, it's as likely as not you wouldn't," he admitted, "for Captain Birch used to trade in the Pacific, where he was very well known and disliked. A big man, he was, with a fist like a lump of teak and a tops'l-yard-ahoy voice you could hear a mile off. And this Captain Birch, he had a schooner called the *Hornet*, and a proper hornet she was, too, if you got aboard her. She used to collect copra from the islands mostly, but her skipper wasn't particular what he took so long as there was a profit on it.

"But he had one big trouble, which was that he couldn't keep a mate. No, sir, a feller would do one trip on the *Hornet* and then he'd quit for good and all. The food was bad, the pay was worse, but the skipper's temper was worst of all. So they wouldn't stand it, and every trip he made Captain Birch had to find a new mate. Some poor son-of-a-gun who'd made foul weather, so to speak, and was on the rocks.

"Well now, one day when he was searching for a mate at Papeete, he came upon a feller called Sam Donovan. Sam was a good seaman and Irish on his father's side, and when Captain Birch met him, he hadn't got a cent in the wide world, Sam hadn't. He'd met with misfortune, in a manner of speaking, which is as likely as not to happen to any man when he bluffs on an empty hand. So Sam, he signed on for the trip and away sailed the *Hornet*."

"But what," asked the stout man impatiently, "has all this got to do with pearls?"

"You wait and you'll hear," replied the seafaring man, eyeing him belligerently. "You want to go too fast, you do. You'll end up, if you aren't careful, like Barney's bull—all of a twist. That's what'll happen to you."

The big man meekly subsided and the other, having leisurely filled his pipe and lighted it, went on.

"Now Sam didn't reckon he'd signed on a passenger boat, mind you, but likewise he didn't reckon on the *Hornet* being what she was or on Captain Birch being what he was. But it didn't take him long to find out, it did not. For the *Hornet*, she rolled like the ——, and Birch, he swore and bullied and carried on like one of them old time Cape Horn skippers. And he was worse when he was drunk, and that was most of the time. Well, that's how it was.

"One day when they were loading copra, Sam went ashore to give his legs a stretch, as the saying is. And when he came back he was laughing all over his face and seemed glad to be alive, which was a very unusual thing for any of the *Hornet's* crew. It was so unusual that Captain Birch got mighty uneasy in his mind. But when Sam started to sing—he had a voice like a cracked fog-horn—he couldn't stand it any longer, Captain Birch couldn't.

" 'You're mighty fresh, Mr. Mate,' says he.

" 'I am that and all,' says Sam.

" 'So mighty fresh that me and you'll part company before long,' says the skipper, for it made him mad to see a feller cheerful—not that he often did. Not aboard the *Hornet*, anyway.

" 'We will that,' says Sam.

" 'See here now, what's bitten you, Mr. Mate?' asks Captain Birch, feeling uneasy sort of.

" 'Nothing ain't bitten me. But—would you know a pearl if you saw it?' says Sam.

" 'I would. There ain't a man in these seas that's a better judge of pearls than me.' "

" 'Then look at that,' says Sam, handing a fine pearl to the skipper, and a fool he was to do it, as you'll see.

"Captain Birch, he takes the pearl and looks at it carefully and then he looks at Sam.

" 'Where did you get this, Mr. Mate?' he asks.

" 'From a drunken Kanaga. Swapped for a jack-knife and a plug of tobacco,' says Sam, and maybe he was telling the truth. And again, maybe he wasn't, but anyway it doesn't matter.

"Well, what does the skipper do but feel in his pocket and hand out a dollar bill to Sam.

" 'What's this for?' asks Sam.

" 'For compensation,' says Captain Birch. 'I don't need to give you anything, but I'm a just man and nobody can say different.'

"Sam stared at him bulgy-eyed for a second or so and then the meaning of it got across to him.

" 'Give me that pearl back,' says he.

" 'Not on your life, Mr. Mate,' answers the skipper. 'I allow no private trading aboard my ship, and you know it if you read the articles before signing on. I could have you jugged for breaking your contract if I liked,' says he.

"AND so far as the law went, he was right. Sam remembered the words, 'No member of the crew shall trade privately, or perform any commercial transactions on his own behalf.' Or something like that. In black and white it was, and he'd signed it. Well, sir, there wasn't a madder man from London to Valparaiso by way of the Horn. There was not. And the things he called the skipper—why, they'd have made a saloon keeper blush. But there it was, the other had got the law on his side, and knew it. And if he'd knocked the skipper down, mind you, that would have been mutiny and two or three years in jug maybe.

"When Sam left the *Hornet*, which he did at Aitutaki, he swore he'd get even with Captain Birch, if it took him all the years of his life to do it. Yes, sir, he made a solemn oath about it and wrote it down in a pocket book and all so's he shouldn't forget it."

The seafaring man paused and started to refill his pipe.

"And what happened then?" asked the stout man with repressed eagerness.

"There you go again," grumbled the seafaring man. "Always in a hurry, always wanting to make a pace. I get a gummy backache just looking at you. I do that."

The stout man subsided, and when the seafaring man's pipe was drawing to his satisfaction, he went on.

"Maybe it was six months after or maybe it was more that Captain Birch, cruising about among them stinking little islands they call the Paumotus, got wind of a story that was going round about a big find of pearls. A lot of it was lies, he reckoned, because those yarns generally are, but he got sort of interested and made inquiries about it whenever he could. And at last he tracked it down to a little Jew feller that kept a store at Papeete. This little Jew feller, so the story went, had lent Sam money to work the pearl beds. And what’s more, mind you, he knew Captain Birch, did this little Jew, and Captain Birch knew him, which was why they didn’t speak to each other. For the Jew allowed that he’d once lent the skipper money that he’d never paid back, and the skipper, he swore it was a lie. So it wasn’t much use his going to Moses for information, he reckoned, because he wouldn’t get any.

“But one day he run right into Moses, either in the street or somewhere else.

“ ‘Hello Moses,’ says the skipper.

“ ‘How’s business, Captain?’ says the other.

“Well, that broke the ice, in a manner of speaking, for it looked as if Moses had forgiven the skipper the money he said he didn’t owe him and the skipper had forgiven Moses for saying he did. And they got chatty like, talking about freights and interest, and presently the skipper asks if the pearl story he’d been hearing about was true.

“ ‘Don’t ask me nothing, Captain Birch,’ says the little Jew, winking very hard. ‘Pearls ain’t in my line of business.’ ”

“ ‘You bet they’re not,’ says the skipper winking back hard at the Jew. ‘Nor in mine neither. Still they’re interesting in a way.’

“ ‘O yes, in a way,’ says the other and they both started laughing,

“ ‘Who’s the feller that’s working the bed?’ asks the skipper.

“ ‘Nobody you know,’ answered the Jew. ‘Feller of the name of Sam Donovan.’

“ ‘Sam Donovan!’ cries the skipper before he had time to think what he was saying.

“ ‘Oh, so you know him, do you?’ asks Moses, looking mighty suspicious.

“ ‘Never heard of him before,’ says the skipper. ‘I once knew a Joe Donovan, but it couldn’t be the same.’

“WELL now, it wasn’t very long before Captain Birch got on the trail of where Sam was working. Some people thought he’d bluffed it out of Moses. Maybe he had and maybe he hadn’t. I don’t know. But anyway, one June morning he heaves-to off an island northwest of Tahiti and lets go his hook. And from all I’ve heard tell he hadn’t no doubts but what he’d fetched up at the right spot, for the stink of the decaying oysters could be smelt miles to leeward of that island.

“So he goes ashore, does Captain Birch, and there he finds Sam and a couple of Kanakas working away on a heap of oysters.

“ ‘Good morning, Mr. Donovan, you’re making your fortune, I hear,’ says he, as polite as a Frenchman.

“Sam, he didn’t say nothing at all, nor it wasn’t necessary for him to do so.

“ ‘I suppose,’ says Captain Birch, ‘you wouldn’t like to sell me a few pearls?’

“ ‘You’re right,’ Sam tells him, ‘I should not.’

“ ‘That’s a pity. I wouldn’t turn away good business if I was you. Maybe you’d let me have a look at some?’

“ ‘I will not,’ Sam tells him.

“ ‘I know what it is,’ says the skipper. ‘You ain’t forgive me for that little pearl deal of ours. But I was within my rights and I’d have been a fool not to have done as I did. Well, let’s forget it and have a drink for old time’s sake,’ says he, taking a bottle out of his pocket. ‘You and me fell out, Mr. Donovan, but I will say this, a better mate and a smarter seaman never stepped aboard the *Hornet*. And I know what I’m talking about.’

“Now, although Sam didn’t give a red cent for Captain Birch’s opinion of him, and knowing, likewise, that he was lying like a Chink, he did hanker after a drop of good whisky. And small blame to him when you come to think of the heat and the work and the smell of them oysters. Anyway, he accepted the invitation, and it wasn’t very long before he was drinking the skipper’s health and his own and the Kanakas’ and everybody else’s he could think of. Well, after a while, when it seemed to Captain Birch as if Sam was safely three sheets in the wind, he started talking about the pearls. And Sam allowed that he’d got a tidy few and reckoned to clear out of the island in another couple of weeks.

“ ‘I’d like to have a look at them pearls,’ says the skipper, pouring Sam out another drink.

“ ‘I daresay you would,’ answered Sam, winking and taking the drink.

“ ‘Pretty poor quality though, I reckon. They mostly are round these parts.’

" 'Poor quality!' shouts Sam. 'I never seen a finer lot of pearls in my life, and I've seen a few.'

" 'I wouldn't expect you to say otherwise, Mr. Donovan. All the same, I don't believe you.'

" 'Oh you don't, don't you?' says Sam. 'Well, you shall see for yourself,' and he fetches out a bag, undoes the string and holds it out to the skipper. 'How's that?' says he.

" 'Not bad,' says the skipper, reaching out and taking the bag.

" 'It's mighty good of you to say so,' Sam tells him, 'and now I'll trouble you to hand them back.'

"Captain Birch, he ties up the bag again very carefully and then looks at Sam.

" 'I'll give you a thousand dollars for that bag,' says he.

" 'You'll what!' roars Sam. 'Why, you couldn't buy that amount of pearls for five thousand dollars and more.'

" 'Call it fifteen-hundred—cash right here.'

" 'Hand over that bag,' says Sam.

" 'I'll say two thousand. Is it a deal?'

" 'It is not. Hand them over.'

" 'It's a lot of money for poached pearls,' says the skipper.

" 'What do you mean?' asks Sam.

" 'You know what I mean, Mr. Donovan. The authorities ain't particularly well disposed toward poachers just now. And, between you and me, there are healthier places to live in than a French jail.'

" 'Captain Birch,' says Sam. I've met a few rogues in my time, but you've got every one of them beat. Do you mean to say you're going to inform the authorities?'

" 'Not if you sell me the pearls. If you don't—well, I reckon it would be my duty to inform.'

"Well, the upshot of it was that Sam agreed he'd rather part with the bag than spend a year or two in the jail at Tahiti. And that very same day Captain Birch set sail. And as soon as he'd gone, Sam did the same, thinking, maybe, it would be wiser not to wait till the authorities moved him out."

THE seafaring man stopped. There was silence for some moments and then the stout man started to laugh.

"So the skipper got the best of it after all," he said. "Brains win every time. A man may be honest, but if he hasn't brains, he's got a mighty poor chance of getting anywhere."

The seafaring man nodded and felt in one of his pockets. Presently he extracted a screw of paper.

"That's one of the identical pearls that Captain Birch bought off Sam Donovan," he said. "It came my way by accident, in a manner of speaking."

The stout man unrolled the piece of paper and gazed with awe at what was inside.

"A very fine specimen," he said, gazing at it acquisitively. Then he handed the seafaring man a cigar. "Make a lovely tiepin," he went on, still eyeing the pearl.

"It's never brought me no luck," sighed the seafaring man.

"Will you sell it?" asked the other.

The seafaring man shook his head.

"No, I wouldn't like to sell it, but seeing that you've took a fancy to it, sir, it's yours.' "

"It's very generous of you," said the stout man becoming very red in the face. "But —I really couldn't." He fumbled in his pocket, drew out a wallet and took from it something that looked to me like a five-pound note. "Here," he said, rather shamefacedly thrusting it into the other's hand, "take this. I know the pearl's worth a heap more, but—but it's all I can afford."

The seafaring man took the note without looking at it and thrust it into a pocket. Just then the train pulled up at a station and the stout man, hurriedly bidding us good-day, got out.

"That was a queer story," I remarked to the seafaring man when the train was moving again, "but I was rather disappointed. I had hoped that Sam Donovan would have got even with that rascally Captain Birch."

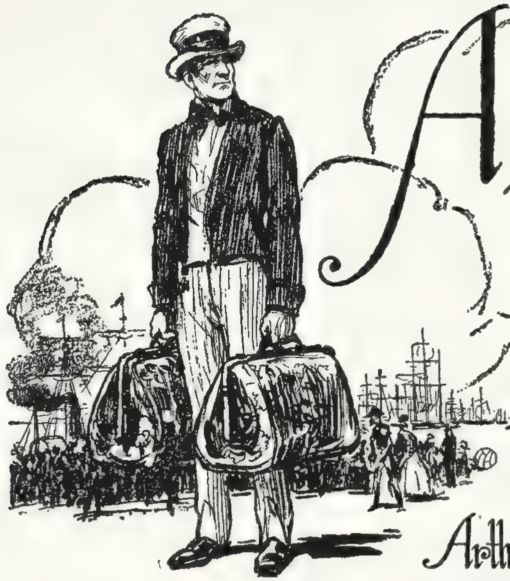
"He did," said the seafaring man.

"How do you mean? I thought—"

"Them pearls that Captain Birch took from him for two thousand dollars were imitations. Sam had bought them from Moses for a few dollars and then set the story going that he'd struck a virgin bed, knowing that Captain Birch would soon be on his track. Yes, I reckon Sam got even."

He felt in his pocket and brought out the five-pound note which the stout man had given him. As he looked at it his face changed.

"Well, I'm blithered!" he cried. "It's a dud!"



A Manifest Destiny

A Five-Part Story

Part One

By

Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Swain's Folly," Porto Bello Gold," etc.

> IT IS the fate of America ever to "go ahead". She is like the rod of Aaron that became a serpent and swallowed up the other rods. So will America conquer or annex all lands. That is her "manifest destiny". Only give her time for the process. To swallow up every few years a province as large as most European kingdoms is her present rate of progress. Sometimes she purchases the mighty morsel, sometimes she forms it out of waste territory by the natural increase of her own people, sometimes she "annexes", and sometimes she conquers it. Her progress is still steadily onward. Pioneers clear the way. These are political agents with money-bags, or settlers in neglected parts of the continent, or peaceable American citizens who happen to reside in the desired countries, and who wish to dwell under the old "Stars and Stripes", or they may be only proper filibusters, who steal and fight gratuitously for their own fast-following Uncle Sam. When they fail in their schemes they are certainly scoundrels, and are commonly so termed; when they succeed, though they be dubbed heroes, they are still the old rogues. Meanwhile America (that is the true title of our country) secures the spoils won to her hand, however dishonestly they may have come. That is only her destiny, and perhaps she is not so blamable as a nation in bearing it willingly. One may profit by the treason, yet hate the traitor. America must round her territories by the sea.
>
> "The Annals of San Francisco" by Soulé,
> Gihon and Nisbet, New York, 1855.

BOOK I

I

THERE was a rush to port as the steamer swung her bow toward the wharf, and Ormerod found himself pinned against the rail in the midst of a shouting, cursing, exclamatory crowd of passengers. So this was El Dorado! It was with a pang of disappointment that he turned his eyes from the tumbling waters of the spacious bay, vividly blue in their setting of forested shores, to the raw newness of the City of Gold, sprawling unkemptly over near-by flats, clambering grotesquely the steep pitch of the rearward hills that must have curbed an ordinary community's growth. Hovels of packing-case boards, log huts, clumsy structures shaped from ships' timbers, shacks of green lumber lurched brazenly in company with square-built blocks of stone and brick. A black scar down one of the hillsides must be the trace of a recent fire; midway of it a horde of human ants were rearing a scaffold in pledge of man's unwillingness to abide the scourging of the elements.

Ormerod owned to himself the rough majesty of the effect. He forgot his disappointment as he eyed again the close-packed shipping. Steamers lay two-and-two at many wharves; ships, barks, brigs were moored so thick that he marveled how a master could con a vessel to sea. It was a good thing they had steam tugs to aid them.

"Two hundred sail within a mile of us," remarked a voice behind him.

"That's nothing," rejoined a second speaker. "When I was here in '50 there was more'n five hundred lyin' in the Bay. And all this land in front of us was at the bottom of Yerba Buena Cove. Yes-sirree, all them houses from Folsom Street to Clark Point, and cl'ar back to Montgomery Street!"

Ormerod surveyed the crude pageant with increased respect. There was something stimulating in the idea of a city built entire—out of the primæval slime, as it were—in five short years.

He screwed his head around for a look at the speaker, a middle-aged, middle-sized, brown-bearded individual in the blue flannel shirt and stuff trousers of the miner, who favored him with a friendly wink, and continued:

"Once you've lived out here, the air back in Bridgeport don't taste the same. I'm a good Yankee, I am. None better. But I guess I'm a better Californian."

He bestowed a second wink on Ormerod.

"If I made one pile I can make another. Anyhow, I saved enough to come West like a millionaire. No more bull-whippin' and Injun-dodgin' for me! You showed hoss-sense, young feller. It's mighty adventuresome to cross the Plains, and shoot buff'ler and lie awake nights waitin' for the Kiowas to jump you, but the Nicaragua Transit gits you out in a quarter the time, eh?"

"Have you ever tried the Panama route?" inquired Ormerod with a flicker of interest.

The miner nodded emphatically.

"Went East by it. Too much fever, and it's two days longer. No-sirree, the Nicaragua Transit is the soo-preme and impereyal highway between the coasts. It's our manifest destiny, to—"

The steamer's whistle tooted hoarsely, and the milling throng of passengers pried the two apart. Ormerod heard a couple of scattered phrases—"white man's country," "everlastin' revolutions," "—— natives—" and once more was alone amongst his eight hundred shipmates. He caught up his two carpet-bags in either hand, and clung to the place chance had given him. Glancing up and down the lines of faces leaning over the rail as the paddles churned to maneuver the liner alongside the wharf. A strange company! Merchants, lawyers, gamblers, a clergyman or two, in broadcloth like his own; hundreds of replicas of the returned argonaut; foreigners of every class and nation; here and there the flutter of a woman's garments. But in the main the *Sierra's* passengers were men, and young men. The middle-aged were few; there were no graybeards.

All the peoples of the world seemed to be represented in the crowd on the wharf. Ormerod, accustomed to the undeviating strains of Irish and German immigration at New York, gasped involuntarily. What a hodge-podge! No wonder San Francisco in its short life had achieved the reputation of being the fastest growing, as well as the wickedest, city in any civilized land.

The young man, clinging to his two carpet-bags at the steamer's rail, had an abrupt vision of the spectacle's significance; the most extraordinary conglomerate race movement of all time, humanity's frank avowal of the mass-attraction of gold. Wealth! That was the ancient lure, and in all the ages it had never been exerted with such potent strength as since the January day of '48 when Marshall, the contractor, testing the flow of water in the tail-race of John Sutter's new saw-mill on the south fork of the American, had happened to perceive the glistening yellow particles in the stream's detritus of sand and gravel. The westward movement already had begun, but not for a generation, perhaps, thought Ormerod, would it otherwise have attained the dimensions it reached in the span of a year.

Who could say how deeply Marshall's observation had affected the tide of human affairs? What influence would it have upon the country? How many lives would it steer into new and unaccustomed channels? And with what differing consequences! Ease and luxury for some who had known poverty; sorrow and privation for many whose paths had been pleasant and secure. At Harvard College, Ormerod remembered, California had been only a name on a map. And now it was a sovereign State of the Union, and should yet be the peer of any, men said.

He was recalled from his speculations by the indignant face of a man on the wharf below him.

"I say," the man's voice reached his ears, an unmistakably English voice, "I say, friend, are you deaf? I say, what news from home? Has Sebastopol fallen?"

Ormerod chuckled.

"Not when we left New York, sir," he called back. "The Allies are having their hands full."

"Oh, I say!" protested the Englishman. "Too bad, you know."

Another voice hailed from the wharf.

"What about Kansas?"

"Still a-bleedin'," rejoined a wit.

"Are they doing anything in Washington?"

"Talking a heap, stranger."

"Who's going to be nominated?"

"Wa'al, Pierce says he's had enough, and most fellers seem to feel the same way."

"Three cheers for Fremont, Californy's fav'rite son!" proclaimed a man on a stringpiece.

The suggestion was received with a mingling of boos and applause.

"No nigger-lovers," shouted a Southern voice. "The South for Democracy!"

More boos and applause, punctuated by continuous blasts of the steamer's whistle and the clatter and bang of the gangplank going over the side.

"All ashore!" roared a boatswain. "All ashore, gents!"

The passengers started to fight their way toward the narrow vent, howling like boys released from school.

"All ashore!" mocked a Bowery twang that infected Ormerod with a momentary touch of homesickness. "San Francisco, gents! Last stop this here boat makes. Connecting with all Erie Canal packets at Albany, and the rail-cars for Chicago and points West!"

The crowd bellowed with laughter, and jammed merrily between two stalwart lines of sailors that had formed to expedite the debarkation. Ormerod thrust his way into the van. Somewhere over the heads of those around him a husky bar-room tenor was chanting:

Oh, Californy!
That's the land for me,
I'm off to Californy
With my wash-bowl on my knee.

II

A NEGRO, a Portuguese and a Kanaka offered to relieve Ormerod of his bags as he entered the whirpool at the gangplank's foot, but he shook his head at all three, and set himself patiently to boring a passage to the street, many eyes following his huge stature and craggy young face. Twice men stopped him with questions as to affairs in the East, and he answered them as well as he could. There was something pathetic, he thought, about this hunger for tidings of the homeland—as if California was separated from its sister States by a wide gulf of trackless seas, instead of being simply on the opposite side of the same continent.

He was turning this over in his mind when a couple intercepted him. One moment he had been pondering the difficulties of stringing the electric telegraph across prairies and mountains; the next he experienced a strange delusion that a brisk wind was blowing in his face. Only it was not a wind, but a girl; a dark, slim, vibrant creature, who seemed to crackle with energy—an energy which beat upon him almost physically. To her arm clung a wisp of an old man, erect with the fragile dignity of a blade that has been honed to a mere edge, features cut as perfectly as a Felice cameo, wrinkled skin the color of antique ivory, white mustache twisted and waxed to twin points.

It was the old man who spoke, but Ormerod was conscious all the time of the girl's eyes devouring his face, of the spiritual disturbance which radiated from her.

"Par-rrdon, señor, but you 'ave come from zee steamaire? *Si!* Per'aps you can tell us of Nicaragua."

Ormerod looked from one to the other, striving to collect his wits. Father and daughter, of course. There was no mistaking the similarity of the eyes, large, luminously brown, brilliant with the fires of souls that burned always at white heat.

"If you will tell me," he said slowly. "What is it you wish to know?"

The old man smiled bitterly.

"We are exiles. To us the fortunes of *la Democracia* mean everything."

"Yes, yes," cried the girl. "What of Granada? Have Jerez and Castellon overcome the Legitimists and captured it?"

She spoke English perfectly, except for a trick of rolling certain syllables.

"I am sorry," said Ormerod, "but the cholera fought for the Legitimists."

The girl clasped her hands to her cheeks with a low moan. The old man swayed and recovered himself.

"General Jerez has retreated?" he quavered.

"So it was said," affirmed Ormerod. "The Democrats have retired to Leon. The Legitimists are undisturbed in the south, but they have made no attempt as yet to attack Leon. They are in bad shape, themselves, according to the Transit employes."

"*Santa Maria!*" gasped the girl. "What terrible curse lies upon our poor country? Ah, it is as if the factions were fierce beasts, pumas ripping at her throat."

"I am grieved that my news should afflict you," apologized Ormerod. "But indeed, Nicaragua is in a terrible state. Outside the narrow district covered by the Transit, no man's life or property is safe."

The old man bent his head.

"It is God's will, señor. When it is meet, conditions will be changed."

Ormerod picked up the carpet-bags he had dropped to the wharf-floor.

"I wish I might be of some service to you," he said bashfully, "but I am a stranger here, myself."

"We are not without friends," the girl retorted, as a queen might rebuke too bold a servant. "You have our thanks, sir."

"Exiles!" he grunted to himself. "They don't know when they are well off. In San Francisco they are safe from the cholera, at any rate."

The odd couple had disappeared when he gained the street, and he forgot them entirely a moment later as his eye lighted upon a rank of coaches beside the plank sidewalk, whose drivers regarded the bustle of arriving passengers with a boredom that savored of affectation.

"What is a good hotel?" Ormerod hailed the driver nearest him, a gaunt, lantern-jawed youth, who was buried in a book, propped open on his lap.

"Ten dollars is the minimum fare," answered the reader, without looking up.

"I didn't ask your fare," rejoined Ormerod good temperedly, "but the name of—"

The coachman flopped the book face-down on the seat beside him, and Ormerod chuckled as he read the title. It was "Pickwick Papers."

"All right, get in," snapped the driver. "You've got to drive to whatever hotel you choose, haven't you?" And then in a tone of surprize: "But look here, your name's Ormerod, isn't it?"

The New Yorker nodded.

"You have the advantage of me. Have I—"

The coachman extended a thin, sinewy hand.

"Yes, but you'd scarcely recall me," he returned, grinning. "I'm Fletcher Cabot. I was three years after you at Cambridge—and there's a lot of difference between a freshman and a senior, eh?"

"How do you happen to be out here?" asked Ormerod with interest.

"Oh, I'm like a lot of others who came West expecting to scrape a fortune out of the ground in a month or two."

"You—ah—didn't strike gold?"

Cabot laughed.

"Oh, I found gold! I was luckier than most, at that. But I was just like ninety-nine out of every hundred lucky fools. I was off hot-foot for 'Frisco to spin my nuggets on the wheel."

Ormerod found himself vaguely disapproving.

"Gambling? That's a poor business."

"It isn't a business; it's a certain loss." Cabot scowled. "But if you'd lived in a mining-camp a few months, up to your knees in mud and water, scrabbling for a few handfuls of gold, you'd grab your first chance to play with it. Mining isn't life, Ormerod. It's drudgery."

"Well, but what do men come to California for?" protested Ormerod.

"I'm blessed if I know. In the early days there were chances for bonanza strikes, but now the big money is in commerce, just as it is in New York. I suppose men will go on taking gold out of the earth, but they won't be fellows with a wash-bowl. No, they'll be paid by the day by big companies, and the gold—or, rather, the dividends—will go to fellows like you—prosperous, rising young lawyers, who have Commodore Vanderbilts for their clients. Oh, I've heard of you! Every now and then a man drifts in who gives me the news from home."

"It strikes me a coachman's life in San Francisco can't be so poor if he gets ten dollars minimum fare," remarked Ormerod drily.

"Yes, if *he* gets it," assented Cabot. "In this case, it goes to my boss, Mr. Jerry O'Callighan, who will probably make a —— sight more out of his livery and trucking business than all except a few of the bonanza boys. And what's more, Jerry will hang on to his. He'll invest his profits in real estate, and I'd rather have a few lots of San Francisco hill-land than the best prospect on the mother-lode."

Ormerod tossed his carpet-bags into the coach.

"Why don't you go home?" he asked. "I'd be glad to have a traveling companion."

"Thanks," said Cabot. "But—the fact is, I hope to be satisfactorily engaged in the near future. That is, not on the box of a hackney-coach. Some of us feel like Daniel Boone—remember him? He always kept a few hundred miles in advance of the farmers. Well, we want to do other things besides hew wood, and pile stone and draw water for the sober business men who are going to build up California. They're a mite more progressive, maybe, than your friends in New York; but their idea of manifest destiny is to let monkeys like me pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them. And that is the principal trait of a good business-man, isn't it?"

"It's funny," said Ormerod, "but you are the second man in the last hour to speak of manifest destiny."

The coachman gathered up his reins.

"You'll hear it frequently in San Francisco. It's the password of the biggest lodge in the country. All the members believe the U. S. A. must grow."

"That sounds rather like nonsense to me," replied Ormerod, "when the whole center of the Republic is a desert that nobody can cross in safety."

"Ah, just so! A desert," assented Cabot. "Why bother with a desert when there are better lands available?"

"Humph! Perhaps," agreed the New Yorker doubtfully. "I'm bound to admit that Greytown, Nicaragua, is nearer New York than San Francisco."

Cabot gave him a curious glance.

"You've admitted a good deal," commented the Harvard coachman. "Now, what about your hotel? Speaking impersonally, I'd recommend the International, up Jackson Street hereaways, for a swell like you."

"I am in your hands," answered Ormerod. "There is just one thing more. Do you know the office of Mr. C. K. Garrison?"

Cabot pursed his lips in a soundless whistle.

"The agent of the Nicaragua Transit? The banker—of Morgan & Garrison? Why, yes. He's one of the most prominent men in San Francisco. He was mayor last year. Since he and Morgan took the Transit away from Vanderbilt—"

Cabot broke off, and indulged in a perfectly audible whistle.

"Ho-ho! I begin to see. You are the Commodore's lawyer, and—"

"Never mind that," interjected Ormerod hastily. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed several groups of his fellow-passengers swarming around the coach. "I want to drive to the hotel, and leave my bags. Then you can take me to Mr. Garrison's office."

"Well, well!" muttered Cabot. "As Sammy Weller might say, 'Ole Misses Destiny is a-swellin' wisibly!' Sammivel, I ain't a coachman for nothink, I ain't."

III

CABOT reined in in front of a handsome granite structure that would have done credit to Broadway. Over the first-floor windows was a long, gilt sign which displayed the legend—

GARRISON, MORGAN, ROLSTON
AND FRETZ, BANKERS
THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC SHIP
CANAL COMPANY
THE NICARAGUA STEAMSHIP COMPANY
C. K. GARRISON, AGENT

And on either side of the entrance were bulletin-boards, with sailing notices, beneath placards which stated—

TICKETS MAY BE PURCHASED
HERE FOR THE NICARAGUA
TRANSIT ROUTE
CHEAPEST, SAFEST AND MOST EXPEDITIOUS ROUTE BETWEEN THE
EAST AND WEST

"Here you are," he announced. "Do you want me to wait? You owe me about twenty dollars already."

There was an undertone of anxiety in Cabot's voice which Ormerod thought he understood.

"Of course, I shall want you to wait," the New Yorker answered cordially. "You have saved me a great deal of trouble. I don't know what I should have done without you. But I am not sure how long Mr. Garrison will keep me, and—"

"Oh, that's all right," said Cabot relievedly. "I'll take the opportunity to see a friend. You won't be out inside half an hour, I guess." His gaunt features twisted in a satirical grimace. "Commodore Vanderbilt's lawyer ought to have a lot to say to old man Garrison.

Ormerod acknowledged the gibe with a smile.

"I'll see you later," he called over his shoulder as he traversed the sidewalk, here paved with squares of flagging.

In the counting-room he beckoned to one of the clerks behind the mahogany barrier.

"I wish to see Mr. Garrison," he announced.

"Mr. Garrison is engaged, sir. The Eastern mail has just come in."

"If you will say to him that Mr. Peter Ormerod, Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt's attorney, is calling on him, I think he will receive me," rejoined Ormerod imperturbably.

The clerk's eyes widened. Everybody in the country knew that Garrison and his partner, Charles Morgan, had incurred the enmity of the New York steamboat magnate in consequence of their strategy—some called it treachery—in jockeying him out of control of the Nicaragua Transit, with its two steamship lines in the Atlantic and Pacific and the canal concession granted by the Nicaraguan government. If the Commodore, as Vanderbilt was popularly called, had sent a lawyer to San Francisco it could mean only one thing: enmity was to become hostility. Ormerod recalled, with reawakened interest, the Commodore's parting injunction—

"Secrecy? ——! When I go after a man, young feller, I go after him in the open. I want him, and I want every one else to *know* I'm after him. What's the use of tryin' to keep a big deal under cover? The bigger it is, the more folks consarned in it. You tell Garrison I'll have control of the Transit back in my hands before the year's out, and then I'll nail his hide on the office floor here to wipe my boots on, —— him! No man can trick me, and git away with it."

The clerk swallowed hard.

"Yes, Mr. Ormerod," he answered. "I'll tell Mr. Garrison you are here. I—I am quite sure he will wish to see you, sir. Take a seat, if you please."

In a moment he had returned, and opened the gate in the counter.

"If you will follow me, Mr. Ormerod. Mr. Garrison's office is this way."

Ormerod stepped through a door into an inner room flooded with the last sunlight of the day. A tall man of commanding presence rose from behind the polished desk to greet him. A typical Yankee face—although Garrison was an up-State New Yorker, Ormerod knew—big, broad, with a wide, thin-lipped mouth and beetling nose, and eyes that shrouded their watchfulness under a humorous twinkle, as one would say, "Dear me! *Must* we take this subject seriously?"

"Mr. Ormerod, I believe? Let me see, you should be Judge Ormerod's son—of Ormerod & Van Ruysdyck, eh? I remember your father well, sir. A very fine man, one of the old school, a great friend of Chancellor Livingston's. I was grieved to hear of his death. Several years ago, now, isn't it?"

"Three years, Mr. Garrison."

"Ah, too bad, too bad! And you have succeeded him in the firm? That's excellent." The humorous twinkle became more pronounced. "A very worthwhile practise, I daresay, with Commodore Vanderbilt for client."

"I have no right to complain," said Ormerod.

"You have a message for me from my esteemed friend, the Commodore? I trust I may still call him so, despite the breach which has come between us. I hold him very high in my regard, Mr. Ormerod."

"Indeed, sir?" The younger man permitted himself a smile. "The Commodore will be interested to hear it."

"I trust so. He has the reputation of being a good friend and a fair enemy. I prefer his animosity, Mr. Ormerod, to the friendship of a sanctimonious hypocrite like Daniel Drew. But I am delaying you in your errand. What is the Commodore's message?"

"The Commodore directs me to say," replied Ormerod, "that he will not sue you for your part in securing control of the Nicaragua Transit, notwithstanding his belief that he has a valid case against you—"

"A matter of opinion," Garrison pointed out.

"Naturally," Ormerod agreed. "A matter of legal opinion. The Commodore does not intend to sue you, as I have stated, because that would take too long. But he gives you complete assurance that he will have wrested control of the Transit route from you by the end of the year."

The twinkle faded from Garrison's eye.

"I do not mind admitting to you—which

means to the Commodore," he answered, "that I appreciate fully the danger of my position. If any other man sent me such a message, I would laugh at him. But I know the Commodore, and I also make it a practise never to undervalue an opponent. If the Commodore said that, he intends that, and my associates and I shall be put to it to stand him off. But you may say to him for me, Mr. Ormerod, that I expect to give him a stiff run for his money."

He paused reflectively.

"I am sorry the Commodore feels so bitter. To us, who are in immediate contact with the needs of the Far West, it had seemed that he was inclined to regard the exploitation of the Transit solely from the aspect of its economic possibilities as a transportation route."

"That is what it is," interposed Ormerod.

"To be sure," agreed Garrison. "But it is more. It is one of three lifelines that connect our people out here with the home States."

He pointed to a map on the wall of the room.

"If you count the several caravan trails across the Plains and the mountains as one route, there remain the Nicaragua Transit and the railroad across the Isthmus of Panama. Of the three I am inclined to consider the Nicaragua Transit as the most valuable under existing circumstances. Without much exaggeration, I might call it the jugular vein of the Republic."

"I shall not dispute you," retorted Ormerod. "And because of its very importance, was it not a questionable undertaking for you to snatch it away from Mr. Vanderbilt while he was absent on his pleasure-trip to Europe?"

Garrison shrugged his shoulders.

"You open up a debatable question, Mr. Ormerod. But beyond the business aspects of the matter, we consider ourselves—whether rightly or wrongly—to possess a more intelligent knowledge of the Transit's bearing on national interests than the Commodore, who looks at it solely as a business investment. For these reasons we should be ill-advised to relinquish it to him. I will go farther, and say that in the long run I believe it will be to his advantage to have us in charge, as our policy will produce a greater sustained revenue and be more calculated to stimulate business as a whole."

"I suppose you wish me to repeat the gist of these remarks to Mr. Vanderbilt," said Ormerod, rising.

"Of course! But don't go, Mr. Ormerod. I have no wish to seem intrusive, but I am tempted to surmise that you did not make this journey for the single purpose of delivering the Commodore's message?"

Ormerod's rugged face lighted up in a rare smile. His features were so large and so homely as to seem distinguished, rough-hewn in a singularly massive way that sharpened the contours of youth and gave him an air of authority beyond his years. He was saved from ugliness by his eyes, sea-blue in color, their size diminished by the depth of the sockets, and by a tumbled mass of brown hair.

"Yes, that is correct, sir," he answered, dropping back into his chair. "And there is nothing secret about the principal purpose of my journey. You see, while the Commodore fully intends to regain control, he is not entirely sure in his mind that he may find it profitable to continue indefinitely operation of the Nicaragua route."

Garrison leaned forward, his interest quickened.

"How? What do you mean, sir? Not continue operation? Indefinitely, you said?"

"Exactly. There is considerable talk in the East of a transcontinental railroad—"

The banker evinced a degree of emotion unmistakably genuine.

"Good ——, Mr. Ormerod, if it only were possible! I would sacrifice every dollar I have invested in the Transit without hesitation if by doing so I could speed the laying of the first mile of track beyond the Mississippi. But I sadly fear it is a chimera, a dream for the future. Do not take my word for it. Go, and see for yourself."

"That is my intention," interposed Ormerod. "I am leaving for the East by the overland route so soon as I can make the necessary arrangements, and in the meantime I propose to secure the views of every man like yourself, who has given the project serious consideration."

Garrison wagged his head thoughtfully.

"Granted that the engineering difficulties might be overcome, there is still the problem of finance. No group of private men, however wealthy, could swing it. And if they could, how would the road be supported, when for hundreds of miles, yes, sir, for close upon two thousand miles, it must traverse an uninhabited country? There would be the attendant difficulties of providing fuel for the locomotives, and of assuring police protection against the hostile Indians. Every mile of track would have to be guarded day and night. Every train would have to carry troops."

He gave the New Yorker a shrewd look.

"By the way," he broke off, "I daresay you were also charged to take into account the feasibility of a canal across Nicaragua?"

Ormerod nodded assent.

"I find myself in entire agreement with the Government's observers on that score," he said. "The engineering difficulties are practically insoluble, and the expense prohibitive."

Garrison chuckled.

"You are a longheaded young man! Personally, I should rather enjoy seeing the Commodore smitten with the desire to become a canal-builder. I am certain every dollar of his great fortune would be swallowed before he was finished. But I should—and I do now—in the first place, advise him against attempting so useless a task. It would only serve to turn the public's attention from the practicable to the impracticable. The Transit is running like a well-oiled clock; it provides a perfectly safe and pleasant means of passing from ocean to ocean, and I question whether even a canal, if built, would prove more expeditious."

"I am in agreement with you there," admitted Ormerod. "But there was one aspect of the Transit situation which caused me uneasiness."

Another shrewd look flashed at him from behind the screen of twinkling good humor.

"The revolution?"

"The revolution," repeated Ormerod. "A country racked like Nicaragua is politically unhealthy, and in such a condition things may contrive to go amiss. I am talking now about your property, I appreciate," he went on hastily, "and I hope you will not suspect me of a desire to be unduly censorious or—"

"On the contrary, on the contrary, Mr. Ormerod. You raise a point which naturally has caused us much thought and anxiety. It would be equally vexatious, I am sure, for the Commodore, if he succeeded in— Yes, Jennings, what is it?"

The clerk who had admitted Ormerod slid into the room, and laid a card on the desk in front of Garrison. The banker stared at it a moment, with a twitch of his thin, mobile lips, and finally waved his cigar toward the door.

"The very man for you, Mr. Ormerod," he exclaimed. "You must see him. He represents what our young bloods call 'manifest destiny'—"

"You are the third man I have met to day who used that phrase," snapped the New Yorker.

Garrison's twinkle became more pronounced.

"I will allow the chief apostle of the cult to explain to you," he answered. "Jennings, you may show in Colonel Walker."

IV

"WHO is Colonel Walker?" asked Ormerod as the door closed on the clerk's back.

Garrison raised his eyebrows.

"Surely, sir, you have heard of him! He is very well known out here. Some call him famous, and some notorious. The filibuster. He led the expedition to Sonora last year."

"I did read about that business in the newspapers," Ormerod recollected. "A crazy affair, wasn't it?"

The banker discarded his cigar, and surveyed momentarily the joined tips of his fingers.

"In the event, yes," he answered finally. "But if it had ended differently Colonel Walker would now be regarded as a second Sam Houston. That kind of exploit, Mr. Ormerod, is judged entirely by its success or failure."

"But how could it have succeeded?" objected Ormerod. "A few score men pitted against the forces of Mexico!"

"Ah! There you encounter the doctrine of manifest destiny," rejoined Garrison. "If you believe in it, you cite the manifold instances of Americans prevailing against all conceivable odds in the struggle for new lands. You bring up Buena Vista, and San Jacinto and a hundred smaller fights. You call attention to the territories brought under the flag in the last half-century. You compare Anglo-Saxon civilization with Latin civilization, republican government with the rule of the dictator, liberty with license."

"It sounds like moonshine to me," said Ormerod.

"Wait until you have talked with Walker. A remarkable man! By the way, do not be misled by his physical appearance. He is a born leader. And absolutely fearless. Hark! Do you hear that?"

He lifted his finger, and Ormerod detected a muffled *clump-clump, clump-clump* approaching the door of the private office.

"He is still on crutches," explained Garrison. "The result of an affair of honor several weeks ago. They tell me he endeavored to conceal the fact of his wound, in order that he might have a second shot at his antagonist—a gentleman from Sacramento named Carter, I believe—but the blood was bubbling out of his boot, and as the California code requires the termination of a duel as soon as a shot— Humph! Here he is."

The clerk pushed open the door and stood aside to make way for the man behind him, who hesitated on the threshold, his slim body balanced between a pair of clumsy crutches. Ormerod rose involuntarily at sight of a cripple, glad of the opportunity movement afforded to conceal the amazement he experienced, despite Garrison's warning.

Could this quaint, pathetic figure be the desperado the newspapers had depicted? This little man in the short-waisted, blue frock coat, baggy, gray trousers and absurdly enormous beaver-hat, the nap of the high crown fluttering in the draft of the doorway! It was preposterous! In stature he hardly reached Ormerod's shoulder; his face was clean-shaven, pallid and spotted with big, yellow freckles; a mass of tow hair showed beneath his hat-brim. His manner was gently deferential.

"I fear I intrude, Mr. Garrison," he said in a low voice, with the soft, slurring pronunciation of the South.

"Not at all, not at all," returned the banker. "You are very welcome, Colonel. I want you to meet this gentleman, Mr. Ormerod, of New York. He is Commodore Vanderbilt's attorney, and is just arrived via Nicaragua."

Walker's lean face lighted up, and for the first time Ormerod perceived the man's one outstanding feature: his eyes, gray in color, with pupils contracted to a pinpoint, their effect at once chilling and magnetic. Ormerod was conscious of a faint stirring of excitement, a sensation of satisfaction. The man *was* a personality, after all. A man must be with such eyes. He had a good chin, too, square in a delicate fashion; and his nose had the aquiline curve of breeding. As he started to swing into the room on his crutches it was apparent that his body was wiry and muscular, and not frail, as might be suspected from its slender proportions. He handled himself without effort, competently, for all the fat bandage wound about one foot.

"I am honored, Mr. Ormerod," he acknowledged courteously. "It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. All the more so, sir, since I called here for the purpose of inquiring the latest news from Nicaragua. Perhaps Mr. Garrison will permit me to share any public tidings you bring."

"By all means," acceded Garrison, and the satirical twinkle which was characteristic of him became more pronounced. "The truth is, Colonel, Mr. Ormerod has delivered me Commodore Vanderbilt's declaration of war."

Ormerod was puzzled by the bluntness of the admission; he had not anticipated it. But if Walker was surprized, he did not show his feelings. Lowering himself deliberately into the chair the clerk placed for him, he commented as imperturbably as though the conversation dealt with the weather:

"A knightly proceeding, gentlemen. It reflects credit on the Commodore." A flash of humor, not a smile, crossed his features. "We shall yet see you merchants patronizing the field of honor in place of the courts, eh? And what the lawyers lose the doctors will gain. Being a practitioner in both professions, I should look upon such a change with entire equanimity."

"You are doctor and lawyer, Colonel?" Ormerod inquired politely.

"Yes, Mr. Ormerod, and journalist at this present, sometime soldier, and it may be in the future statesman or politician."

"You are versatile," observed the New Yorker.

"If I am, sir, it is because I employ whatever means come to hand to reach my goal."

"You have neglected to describe yourself as filibuster, Colonel," suggested Garrison, "a rôle which many persons might acclaim your greatest."

Walker inclined his head with the quiet dignity of the man who is sure of himself.

"I am not ashamed of that title any more than of the medical degree and the barristership I won. The filibuster seems to have a well designed place in modern life."

"We were speaking of manifest destiny, Colonel, as your card was fetched in to me," remarked Garrison. "I told Mr. Ormerod that you were the best man I knew to explain its true significance as a doctrine."

The banker turned to Ormerod.

"I was also on the point of telling you that Colonel Walker has a project in view which should be of interest to your client, the Commodore, if he makes good his threat to oust my associates from the Nicaragua Transit."

And to Walker he added—

"I have your permission to open the subject, Colonel?"

Walker simply inclined his head again. His eyes were on Ormerod's face. Garrison he seemed to dismiss from consideration as a factor with which he was acquainted. His attention was all for the stranger, and Ormerod had an uncomfortable feeling that the little man was boring to the inmost depths of his soul.

"You mentioned the revolution, Mr. Ormerod," continued Garrison; "and you also emphasized the political unhealthiness of the country in consequence of it. Colonel Walker, here, has a plan for getting Nicaragua on to its feet once more, re-instituting the prosperity and order which fled when the allegiance to Spain was cast off. He has a contract with Castellon, Provisional Director of the Democrats, to bring in three hundred American colonists, who will be supplied with lands by the Government and, of course, paid for any services they may render. With such aid the Democrats should be able to conquer the Legitimists, and so—"

Ormerod's thoughts harked back to the old man and the girl who had accosted him on the steamship wharf, and he blurted out:

"But the Democrats are in a bad way! The cholera had been terrible, everybody said along the Transit."

"But the Legitimists are still besieged in Granada?" interposed Walker.

"No, Colonel. General Jerez and the Democratic army have retreated to Leon."

Again Walker betrayed no surprize, although Garrison exclaimed:

"Why, this is bad news, indeed, Colonel! Your friends must be at a great disadvantage. Well, well, your plan seems to be doomed."

"Not at all," answered Walker. "The more desperate the plight of the Democrats, sir, the more desperate becomes their need of our assistance—and therefore the surer we may be of exacting our own terms."

Garrison indicated a dubious assent with this opinion.

"Very likely, but you forget that your task of raising funds in San Francisco is increased beyond computation. A business man, you know, doesn't like to invest money with a side which seems to be losing."

Walker shrugged indifferently.

"Business men, as a class, are quite as reluctant as you say, Mr. Garrison, to bolster a failing cause; but my experience has been that they are equally reluctant to support either side in a conflict as far removed from their immediate concerns."

His gray eyes dwelt coldly on the banker's ruddy face.

"You, for example, my dear sir, whose interests may even be said to entwine with those I represent, are not willing to venture any stake in an enterprise, which, if successful, must react importantly upon your pocket."

"I plead guilty," Garrison replied frankly. "In my position, as agent and officer of a corporation which is a creature of the Republic of Nicaragua, it would be madness for me to appear as a contributor to the funds of an expedition which was designed for the purpose of defeating one of the factions struggling for control of the Republic. Thank you, no, Colonel! For the time being, you must be content with my good wishes."

"For the time being?" Walker repeated.

But Garrison affected not to hear him.

"All this must be very bewildering to you, Mr. Ormerod," he said.

"I do not think I follow you," admitted the New Yorker. "Surely such an expedition as Colonel Walker's is illegal. The Neutrality Laws!"

"I have shown my papers to General Wool, in command of the Military Department, and to Mr. Inge, the Federal District Attorney," replied Walker. "They both have assured me that my plans are entirely legal. You see, Mr. Ormerod, I made the mistake of placing myself outside the law in my Sonora venture. I have been at pains not to repeat the blunder."

"And do you propose to lead three hundred men to Nicaragua for the purpose of attempting tropical farming or mining?" demanded Ormerod. "I should think there would be opportunities of fortune awaiting all of you closer to home."

"That is a matter of opinion," said Walker. "Besides, sir, there is the question of the manifest destiny of our race."

"Manifest destiny!" repeated Ormerod. "Those two words seem to cover a great deal of ground."

"They do, sir," Walker agreed softly. "It may be they will cover a hemisphere."

Ormerod was staggered. The little, gray-eyed man's seriousness took his breath away.

"But destiny is an empty word," the New Yorker asserted. "Destiny is— A man or a nation work out their destinies. Destiny is the product of deeds."

Walker shook his head slightly.

"You have it the wrong way around, Mr. Ormerod," he answered. "Destiny is as infallible as nature. It is the mysterious force which provides that a certain man shall be born on a certain day, that a certain talent shall come to fruition at the required time, that a certain race shall be endowed with the qualities requisite to national greatness, and then given the opportunities to demonstrate them. Destiny is life, sir."

Garrison rose from his chair with a hearty chuckle.

"Come, come," he remonstrated. "This conversation is growing philosophical. You will acquit me of discourtesy, gentlemen, if I remind you that my Eastern mail remains to be read. Can I serve either of you in any way?"

Ormerod stood up hastily, and Walker gained his feet with the curious deliberation which attended all his movements.

"I must apologize, sir," said the New Yorker. "I have trespassed too long on your good nature."

"Your call has been a pleasant break in my routine," returned Garrison. Good-day, sir. Colonel Walker, drop in again. In the meantime, I trust you will do what you can to enlighten Mr. Ormerod on the doctrine of manifest destiny—or any other matters. Remember, if his predictions of evil for me are borne out, you will have his principal to reckon with in your project."

The banker's chuckle was mingled with Walker's low-spoken farewell as Ormerod held the office door for the crippled filibuster to pass out.

Clump-clump thudded the crutches ahead of him, and Ormerod noted that the clerks were all peeking from behind their ledgers. Even customers in glossy broadcloth and rough miners at the bullion-counter peered covertly at the little gray-eyed man with a respect the more impressive for its silence. Certainly, Walker was feared. But Ormerod asked himself honestly if there was not more than fear in those furtive glances. Yes, a man must have achieved some degree of character to command so universal an amount of attention as he hobbled unprepossessingly through a crowded office at the afternoon's busiest hour.

Well, it had been interesting to meet him. It would be another anecdote to tell old Richard van Ruysdyck and Lydia when he went to dinner in Washington Square. He need not encounter the man again. A brisk word at the door, Cabot's coach would be waiting, and so—he had little enough time in San Francisco without wasting it upon adventurers of this Southerner's stamp.

CABOT abandoned "Pickwick Papers," and leaned from his box as Walker and Ormerod reached the street, but to Ormerod's startled irritation he addressed himself to the filibuster.

"What luck, Colonel?" he called eagerly.

"All that could be expected, thank you," replied Walker.

Ormerod's irritation flamed into wrath. So the coachman was a spy! It was an impossible situation, and he acted to terminate it on the impulse of the moment.

"I shall not require your services any longer," he said coldly to Cabot. "If you will call at the desk of the hotel the clerk will pay you whatever charges I have incurred."

And without a word to Walker, he turned on his heel. But he had not taken two steps when Walker's voice halted him, a ring of command in the low tones:

"Mr. Ormerod! A moment, if you please. You are under a misapprehension."

"I think not," denied Ormerod.

"But you are, sir." Walker swung toward him until they stood face to face. "It is not surprizing that you should be, and

I will be entirely frank with you, and admit that Cabot brought me word of your call upon Mr. Garrison—and that I hastened to intercept you here."

Ormerod frowned down from his superior height, unmollified by the admission.

"That was very strange conduct," he answered, "both on your part and that of Cabot, who chose to pose as a former acquaintance."

"That had nothing to do with it," asserted Cabot. "I went to Colonel Walker because, as the situation stands, you ought to know each other. Besides—"

Walker silenced the coachman with a look.

"If you will suffer me, Mr. Ormerod? There is no mystery about my appearance in Mr. Garrison's office. As it happened, I had word that the *Sierra* brought news of the retreat of the Democratic army from Granada, and I desired to obtain confirmation of this from Mr. Garrison. I was preparing to start when Cabot came to my lodgings, and told me of your visit and its implications."

"Is Cabot in your pay?" Ormerod demanded sharply.

"Look here," growled Cabot. "You don't need to act like a giddy idiot. I am Colonel Walker's friend."

Walker's eyes beat unflinchingly upon Ormerod's.

"He is a member of my contemplated expedition," amended the filibuster. "Your call upon Mr. Garrison suggested possible developments of importance to us. I wished to learn what it meant. There is no guile in my attitude toward you or your client, Mr. Vanderbilt."

Ormerod shook his head.

"I consider it distinctly suspicious that Mr. Garrison was so anxious to bring us together," he insisted.

The flash of humor that was not a smile, yet served as one, crossed Walker's blank features again.

"There your suspicion is perhaps justified, Mr. Ormerod. The same thought lurked in my own mind. Mr. Garrison is a wily individual, not too particular in the methods by which he attains his ends, especially when he is able to argue himself into believing attainment is for the good of others. But since we are alert to his maneuvers, why should we permit them to cause us annoyance?"

Ormerod heard this amazing statement in silence.

"And whatever Mr. Garrison may have intended, sir," Walker added, "I can assure you that he had no hope of seducing me to any dishonorable policy. My reputation is too well known for that."

The drawling tones carried an unmistakable weight of conviction. But with the pugnacity of his nature Ormerod pointed out—

"It would be distinctly to the advantage of Mr. Garrison if I let you persuade me to commit Mr. Vanderbilt to a course which would secure him the resentment of one of the Nicaraguan factions."

"I am glad to see that you are not the kind of man who throws over his opinions in response to the first argument," returned the filibuster. "But will you give me an opportunity to discuss the whole issue at greater length and in privacy?"

He glanced at the passersby, who began to eye inquisitively the tall, homely young man and the little figure on crutches.

"I live at Duval's," he went on. "If you will accompany me there I am sure I can explain my position so as to satisfy your doubts, and perhaps also supply you with information helpful to your mission."

Five minutes before Ormerod must have laughed at the idea that he would seriously entertain such an invitation—and now he found his whole inclination toward acceptance.

"Thanks, I'll go," he said, "Cabot, I suppose you can find your way again to Colonel Walker's—"

"Second court on the right hand side—last house but vun on the same side the vay," replied the coachman cryptically. "Take the box as stands in the first fireplace 'cos there aint no leg in the middle o' the table, vich all the others has, and its werry inconwenient."

"Our friend is an admirer of Mr. Dickens," commented Walker as Ormerod assisted him into the coach. "Thank you, sir. Will you object if we drive slowly? This foot of mine—" he shrugged his shoulders—"is not adapted to San Francisco's streets, which occasionally become reminiscent of a Louisiana parish road."

"You have lived in that State?" asked Ormerod, taking a seat beside the filibuster.

"Yes, sir. I was admitted to the bar in New Orleans."

"Is that your native state, Colonel?"

"No, I am from Nashville, Tennessee."

"You must have traveled a great deal?" inquired Ormerod.

In the gathering dusk there was little to be seen under the occasional flickering gas-lamps, and Ormerod pressed the conversation as much for diversion as because of his genuine curiosity regarding the most unusual character he had ever met.

"A great deal," Walker repeated. "In Europe as well as North America, sir. Traveling and study have been my favorite occupations when I could afford them."

"Study of what, Colonel?"

"Of anything worth while. I turned first to the ministry, but lacking an inspiration of grace, I took up medicine. A fascinating science! Its possibilities are boundless. But there is no scope within it for the man called to rule, so I abandoned it for the law."

He said this so naturally as to dismiss any accusation of egotism from his companion's mind.

"So you consider you have a political bent?" prompted Ormerod.

"Yes, I deviated to political life by way of the law and journalism, at which last I have had more actual success than in either of my other professions. But I find myself antipathetic to political life as it is practised in America. Under our system we have the domination of the herd; the individual is at a loss. Serve the herd long and faithfully, no matter however stupidly, and you may expect gradual and continued advancement. But be independent at your peril, sir."

"I had not looked at our political affairs from that viewpoint," said Ormerod. "We seem to get along as a country, you will admit."

"Yes, we get along. Divine Providence, Destiny, Nature, whatever implacable force it is which molds our puny lives, has wrought out a line of conduct for our people. Despite our blindness we shall be held to its completion."

He was silent for a moment.

"But of the presidents since Andrew Jackson, Mr. Ormerod, who has been a leader, a *man?*"

"General Taylor," hazarded the New Yorker.

"He might have been had he lived to round out his term," conceded the filibuster. "But I suspect he would have gone down in our history as a blunt, outspoken, old soldier, who was cozened and bulldozed by the politicians.

"There is much in what you say," Ormerod admitted. "But surely we shall some day have a forceful personality in the White House."

"I see no signs of it. No, sir, we are advancing steadily toward the apotheosis of the herd. Whereas in Europe—"

He peered closer at the New Yorker in the dim light of the coach's interior.

"Have you ever been abroad, Mr. Ormerod?"

"Yes, some years ago."

"Then you must have observed the trend in international political thought away from popular government. In France, for instance, it had reestablished the Empire, under the leadership of Louis Napoleon, a man of destiny, if there ever was one. In Germany the struggle to undermine monarchical institutions has resulted in a strengthening of the sovereign's powers; the tendency is in the direction of a more centralized government. In Austria-Hungary liberal opinion has been wiped out with firing-squads. In England, where reform once was strongest, the impetus is now contrary. Everywhere you see nations submitting themselves to one leader or to a group of uncontroled leaders."

"Are you suggesting the failure of popular government?" queried Ormerod.

"To an extent, yes. Although I would not be understood as condemning it outright. I might better describe it as suffering from too free exploitation. It has been carried beyond the capacity of the peoples in whose hands it has been placed. Indeed, I incline more and more to the conception of the ideal government as a species of dictatorship in connection with a senate of limited authority. After all, sir, the Roman idea has never been surpassed. Let destiny supply the man, rather than the accident of birth or the hypocrisy of the ballot-box."

Ormerod shook his head.

"I fear you would be convicted of heresy on the hustings in any State of the Union, Colonel, if you enunciated that theory publicly."

"I do not doubt it," Walker replied calmly. "For that reason I abstain from California politics, notwithstanding I have been offered inducements to present myself in several candidacies."

Ormerod strove again to detect a taint of vanity or self-sufficiency in the other's measured words, but without success. Walker's seriousness of purpose was overwhelming. Already, by sheer force of personality, he had cast a spell over Ormerod's imagination, and partly in instinctive resentment at this, the New Yorker exclaimed jestingly:

"That is a favorite word on your lips, destiny. I have heard you use it several times."

"It is a mighty word," answered Walker. "A convenient word, sir. It explains the unexplainable. We should all be better off if we trusted to it occasionally instead of to the pettyfogging logicalities of little, near-sighted minds."

"But if you despair of our country, how can you believe in our manifest destiny?" pressed Ormerod.

Walker was silent while the coach jolted around a corner.

"A people's destiny may be beyond the people's deserts," he replied finally. "Remember, Mr. Ormerod, one man sent at the right time, bearing the essential message, may divert the most worthless, incompetent people—let alone ours, who, with all their faults, are far from that—into paths leading to national greatness.

"But we must postpone our debate. This is Duval's."

VI

DUVAL'S was a vast, rambling, frame barrack, two stories high, its dingy front outlined in a crazy-quilt pattern of yellow radiance that poured through a double row of windows. A hum of voices rumbled from the bar, in front of which Cabot had stopped; knots of idlers clustered about the several entrances.

"A French hostelry, of an engaging, if informal style," was Walker's comment as he crutched himself across the sidewalk. "It is my habit to appear in the bar every evening at this hour. So my friends know where to find me, in case they have business requiring my attention. If you will open the door for me— Ah, thank you, Mr. Ormerod."

Ormerod observed that Cabot had consigned his horse to the charge of a ragged Mexican youth and was following them into the bar. So, also, were two men who had been among those lounging by the door as the coach drove up. But the New Yorker gave no thought to the incident, for his eyes were blinded by the glare of the gas-jets inside, as his ears were deafened by the clamor of the crowd that stood two-deep along the polished counter and gathered thickly around the gambling-tables at the far end.

In the circumstances, the attention Walker commanded was conclusive proof of the uncanny power he wielded. Ormerod could have sworn there was a perceptible lull in the uproar. Certainly, a dozen men either nodded greetings or called: "Good evening, Colonel!" "How are you, Colonel Walker?" Others stared, and muttered behind their hands. Three came forward to receive him: a dapper youngster, in faded broadcloth, whose tiny mustache and imperial proclaimed his nationality; a huge, blond, bearded man, a shade taller than Ormerod, with an unmistakable military carriage; and a lean frontiersman, saturnine of face, who wore a revolver belted over his buckskin shirt.

"Ah, my friends," said Walker. "Have you been waiting long? I was detained by the good fortune of meeting this gentleman, Mr. Ormerod, of New York. Three of my associates, Mr. Ormerod—the Viscount de Morbecque, Captain von Ritterstein and Mr. Jenkins."

The three gravely shook hands with Ormerod, de Morbecque as gracefully as a woman, although his tapering fingers were more sinewy than they looked to be; the German offering a calloused horseman's palm that ground the New Yorker's with crushing force; Jenkins with a grip like the clutch of a steel bear-trap, paralyzing in its sudden exertion of strength.

"I am charmed, sair," murmured de Morbecque.

"Goot efening," boomed von Ritterstein.

"Howdy, Mister," said Jenkins.

"Have you anything to report?" asked Walker briskly. "You will pardon me, Mr. Ormerod, if I take up my personal affairs for a minute or two?"

"Don Jaime and the señorita are in the restaurant, *mon ami*," began the Viscount. "They—"

"We left our likker over yonder on the bar, Colonel," suggested Jenkins. "What say we move back to it?"

"Very well," agreed Walker, swinging

toward the unoccupied space which had been scrupulously respected by the elbow-prodding horde. "What can I order for you, Mr. Ormerod?"

"Nothing, at present, thank you," answered Ormerod.

"You must be thirsty," rejoined the filibuster. "Join me in a glass of French water—I seldom touch alcohol, myself."

"Thanks," Ormerod assented, and ranged himself with Cabot in the second line of drinkers. Out of the corner of his eye he noted automatically that the two strangers who had entered after them had acquired a place next to Walker's party.

"What do you think of it all?" inquired Cabot, grinning.

"Things have happened too fast for me to be able to think," admitted Ormerod. "But tell me: Who are the three men with Colonel Walker? You'd scarcely think they had anything in common."

"They're the three closest friends in 'Frisco," answered Cabot. "As for what they have in common—well, they are all adventurers and they all believe in this manifest destiny that you are hearing so much about."

"What have a Frenchman and a German to do with the manifest destiny of the United States?" demanded Ormerod.

"Where would the United States have been without immigrants to think for it and fight its battles?" countered Cabot. "They won't be the first foreigners to show America the way. I wish there were twenty thousand like them here."

"This manifest destiny brotherhood seems to be of international growth," remarked Ormerod.

"It is. All men belong to it who believe the fighting, civilizing races are destined to rule the earth. And we don't want to see John Bull gobble up everything that's left. He's welcome to his manifest destiny, but we want ours—and ours is North America."

"An interesting doctrine, but dangerous," pronounced Ormerod.

"That's part of its fascination," agreed Cabot. "Anything desirable is likely to be dangerous because if it is desirable there is competition for it. And only a dangerous undertaking would attract men like those."

He nodded to the three grouped with Walker at the bar. In the babble of voices it was impossible to overhear what was said beyond arm's reach.

"There's de Morbecque. He was in a duel in Paris, ran through a crony of Napoleon's, and before that had run through his estate. Like every man in every country who gets himself into such a plight he came to California. He'd rather fight than eat, and when he isn't fighting or plotting to fight he's singing."

Ormerod glanced at the delicate features, effeminate in their contours, the waving brown hair, the supple frame as tenuous as Walker's. It seemed incredible that such a man could be a fighter, but as he looked he traced a shadowy over-mask that settled upon the Frenchman's face in response to some remark of Walker's, and in the winking of an eye what had been almost beautiful became sinister, threatening.

"And the German," he prompted.

"Oh, von Ritterstein was out in the '48. He was a captain in a Prussian cavalry regiment. Exiled, of course. He's been in several revolutions south of us, knows something of Nicaragua, speaks Spanish. Never has much to say. He's a doer."

"He's not so hard as the other to understand," decided Ormerod. "Jenkins, I I should say, is a frontiersman."

"Yes, Tom is all of that. He's a friend of Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, Jim Beckwourth, all that crowd; he knows Indians the way you know law."

"What use can he be in Nicaragua?"

"Ha-ha," chuckled Cabot. "Use? We could use fifty like Tom. They call him 'Up'—because of a little trick he has of being swift on the draw. He never has any trouble holding that gun of his; the stock is well-notched. He's a fighter. A great scout, too. And he speaks Spanish, learned it down in New Mexico— Hullo! What the ——!"

The babble of voices was abruptly stilled. Men were backing away from the bar, ducking for cover behind the gaming tables. Ormerod perceived that the little group surrounding Walker had become isolated, and then he heard the filibuster speaking, the low tones instinct with menace.

"I know you, Mr. Spencer. I know, too, the 'Honorable'—" Walker contrived to invest the word with blasting contempt—"Billy Webster. I have noted the interest you demonstrate in my goings and comings, and what I have to say. For a while it entertained me, but it had become a nuisance."

He was addressing the two men who had followed him in from the street. One the gaslight revealed as a rough customer of the type Ormerod had often seen hanging around New York political headquarters, a tough in the seedy garments of a gentleman, somewhat unsavory as to linen, bushy-whiskered, red-nosed, with a manner compounded of fluster and bluster and a treacherous eye. The second was as easily recognizable as an English blackleg, handsome in a florid way, shoddily fashionable. He had a narrow, horsey face, a drooping, reddish mustache and a pompous presence.

It was the Englishman who answered Walker.

"I'll not be bullied, Mr. Walker. You may pistol whom you please, but I am an English gentleman."

"Gentleman!" Walker's voice was blistering. "God help England if she stands on the characters of men like you, Webster. You are a spy, an English spy, and have been for the last ten years."

From where he stood Ormerod could see Walker's face, and the blaze of ferocity in the gray eyes made him catch his breath; they had ceased to be gray, in fact. Expanded until they seemed to fill the recessed sockets, they gleamed with a cold green light, malignant beyond description.

"It seems," sneered the Englishman, "that you consider yourself too good to stand at the same bar with ordinary men."

"Yes, by ——," snarled his partner, Spencer, "things have reached a pretty pass in 'Frisco if men can't come into Duval's bar without asking William Walker's permission!"

"You may stand where you please so long as it is not at my elbow," said Walker.

"We'll stand where we—"

Walker leaned forward on his crutches, his eyes full on Spencer's face, and the man's voice frayed to a throaty growl.

So quiet was the room that Ormerod heard a whisper from the crowd of onlookers pressed against the rear wall:

"Look out! There'll be shooting yet."

Walker heard it, too, and withdrawing his gaze from the two men in front of him, he looked over his shoulder, casually reassuring.

"Be at your ease, gentlemen," he said. "There will be no shooting tonight. Individuals of this character are not the kind to exchange fire in the open, face to face."

"Being a cripple, you know it's safe to say that," fumed the Englishman.

Walker smiled faintly—if the expression could be called a smile which involved no stricture of the muscles.

"I have a derringer within reach of my hand," he answered. "Would you like—"

"I'm not armed," cried Webster.

A ripple of mirth started down the length of the bar, spread with contagious rapidity and became one thunderous guffaw. Webster's face was purple. Spencer flicked a hand toward his waist, then dropped it as if it had touched fire, his visage convulsed with baffled fury.

"Yes," he shouted as the mirth died away, "you know Tom Jenkins and your other friends are standing behind you to get us, even if we get you. It's easy for half a dozen men to bluff two, but you can't always lord it round here. One of these days you'll find—"

"That will do," said Walker. "It was not my intention to bandy words with you, Spencer. I merely wish to warn you that I am aware of your attempts to spy upon me. I know the paymasters who retain you, and I will not be annoyed further. You understand me? I think you had better go."

The Englishman's mouth opened.

"I think you had better go from here," repeated Walker, his voice softer than ever.

Webster's mouth snapped shut.

"Oh, come on, Billy," scowled Spencer. "The cards are stacked."

Half-way to the door he lifted a shaking forefinger.

"I'll not forget this, Walker! By the eternal, I'll pay you back, if it takes five years."

Without according the pair the slightest attention, Walker turned to Ormerod.

I have to apologize for involving you in a bar-room brawl, sir," he said with the courtesy of his normal manner. "Believe me, I am loath to seem to show so little respect for a guest. But I had reached a point where I could not tolerate longer the surveillance those two endeavored to maintain upon my movements."

"Who are they?" asked Ormerod.

"Webster, as I told him, is a spy, an agent of the British Government's secret service. He is also in the pay of the Nicaraguan Legitimists, who retain Spencer to watch me."

"Do you mean that the British Government is concerned with your expedition, Colonel?" Ormerod inquired with a scepticism he did not speak to hide.

"It is much more concerned than our own Government," Walker replied without feeling. "Have you ever stopped to consider the effect upon the world's balance of power occasioned by the extension of the United States to this date? The day is not far distant, Mr. Ormerod, when the nations of the Old World will bow to the might of the New. And Britain, very humanly, would do what she can to keep our prestige to her level. Her seizure of the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua was the first step to insure her equal partnership with us in any canal enterprise, and thinking Englishmen realize that an American colony in Nicaragua would ultimately—"

He broke off as the bar's patrons began to swarm uncomfortably close, several men evidently waiting for a chance to congratulate him.

"If you do not mind, we will adjourn to the restaurant, sir. I had finished my business with my friends. Cabot, will you dine with our three inseparables? That's well. I wish an opportunity to be private with Mr. Ormerod. Now, gentlemen, by your leave, there is no occasion for this excitement. Yes, yes, I appreciate your kindness. Thank you! Thank you! No, no, I have no intention of following up the matter. I meet only honorable men on the dueling-field. Nonsense, my dear sir, there is no merit in reproving such scoundrels; they have no bowels. Now, if you will permit us to pass to the restaurant. I thank you, gentlemen!"

VII

WALKER led the way through a door at one side of the bar into the hotel lobby; opposite was the entrance to the restaurant, a spacious room decorated in white and gold, which impressed Ormerod with delighted surprize, it was so different from the noisy tawdriness of the scene he had just left. Men and women were dining quietly at the immaculate tables. French waiters were hastening deftly to and fro. It might have been Delmonico's or the Metropolitan, except for the absence of evening dress.

A head-waiter came up as Walker appeared, but the filibuster ignored him, studying the tables until his eyes rested upon one in a corner by a window. Then he bowed between his crutches, and Ormerod, imitating his example, perceived with a shock of exhilaration that the table's occupants were the old man and the girl who had accosted him on the Jackson Street wharf. He saw, too, that they recognized him, for, as they acknowledged Walker's gesture, the girl leaned forward and her lips fluttered at her father's ear.

"I've seen that couple before," the New Yorker exclaimed involuntarily. "They stopped me on the wharf to ask about Nicaragua."

"So?" Walker's eyebrows lifted. "Then they had their information from the same source as I did."

"Any other passenger probably could have told them as much," said Ormerod.

"Perhaps," rejoined Walker. "Come! You shall meet them formally, sir. They are object-lessons of their country's sorry state."

He looked again at the Latin girl and wondered what Lydia would think of her? He had a lightning vision of Lydia, queening it in her father's house about this time of an evening, the walnut parlor abuzz with company; some of the van Renssalaers, no doubt; Mr. Greeley, with inky fingers and fidgety to return to his presses; Stewarts, Enos, Rhinelanders, Davises, Van Beurens, Brevoorts, Professor Morse and very likely Miss Green from her school at No. 1 Fifth Avenue, where Lydia had graduated—was it only two years ago? It seemed five, ten, well, a long time. And the Commodore would ramble in, probably after dinner, and swap questionable stories in the dining-room with "Live-oak" George Law—bitter enemies, those two, save for the one purpose, and that on neutral ground.

No, Lydia would never approve—

He halted at sound of Walker's voice. He was being introduced.

"Have I your permission, señorita? My friend, Mr. Ormerod, of New York—Señorita de Avila. Mr. Ormerod—Don Jaime de Avila."

Ormerod regained the present with a jerk. Don Jaime was regarding him speculatively out of melancholy eyes. The señorita, a pink flush in her olive cheeks, exhibited as frank an interest.

"We 'ave had the honor-rr of meeting Meestaire Ormerr-rod," answered Don Jaime. " 'E has—"

"But can it be that you are one of us?" cried the señorita in her liquid English.

Ormerod bowed.

"I fear I am only an ignorant stranger," he said.

"Mr. Ormerod is the attorney of Commodore Vanderbilt," Walker corrected suavely. "He has come to San Francisco to acquaint Mr. Garrison with the Commodore's intention to recover the Transit."

"And he is not one of us!" protested the señorita.

"Not yet," qualified Walker.

Ormerod shook his head in vigorous dissent.

"No, no, I am of no party in this affair. It is impossible."

"It ees impossible you should not be," Don Jaime rebuked him sternly. "All Americans will be of a parr-rty after *el Coronel* has sailed."

The Señorita de Avila swept his face with a single luminous glance, then dropped her eyes while her father made several inquiries as to individual leaders in Nicaragua, most of which Ormerod was unable to answer.

De Avila sighed.

"It ees a leetle land, Nicaragua, Meestaire Ormerr-rod, but to me—" his tone took on an added dignity—"what it ees my fathers made it. I 'ope to see it once again reech and happy. Thank you, saire."

His daughter gravely inclined her head, and the Americans moved off to the table the head-waiter indicated to them at the side of the room.

"Who are they?" Ormerod asked as soon as Walker was seated and had propped his crutches behind him.

"The best of their race," returned the filibuster. "Their stock has not been smitten by the curse of all Latin-America. It is as pure today as when Gil Gonzalez de Avila left his home in Old Spain to seek his fortune on the Main—and found it in Nicaragua. They are of the conquistadores, Mr. Ormerod."

Ormerod was puzzled.

"It was my understanding that the old aristocracy in Nicaragua, as a rule, sided with the Legitimists," he said.

"That is true," agreed Walker. De Avila is a native of Granada, all of his property is located in that city or in the adjoining districts; but notwithstanding that, he was one of the first Nicaraguans to embrace the Liberal cause at the time of the revolution to free Central America from the chains which bound it to Iturbide's Mexican Empire. He fought side by side with Morazon. He bears two wounds on his body. And what has he to show for it? The Legitimists of Granada hate him for a turncoat, a Democrat reared in their midst. They have confiscated his estates. The Democrats of Leon and the North make use of his talents, but secretly they suspect him always because he is one of the despised Granadinos."

"But what does he do here?"

"He is in San Francisco in connection with my expedition, Mr. Ormerod. His position in Leon was equivocal—in recent years he had avoided the issue by serving his country abroad as minister at London, Washington and other places. But today Nicaragua's ministers are jokes in every capital, because no country can be sure how long any given faction will be in authority—as at present, when the country is equally divided between the two parties. So Don Jaime, hearing of my project to bring a steadying influence into Nicaragua in the shape of an American colony, decided that it was the best opportunity to reduce the existing chaos to order, and after assisting my agents to secure the necessary contracts from the Democratic Government at Leon, he came North to confer with me. His counsel has been invaluable."

Ormerod picked at the tablecloth.

"And his daughter?" he mumbled.

"Ah, sir, there is a woman of the ancient line of heroines! You may see her as she sits across the room from us. Judge of the prestige that is hers in any cultured society. She has been the pet of foreign courts. For years she lived in comfort, even in luxury. In Nicaragua her mother's family, who are Leonese, would supply her with the background which is everything to other women. But she scorns ease for principle. She prefers to share her father's exile, so that she may aid him in his plans to restore their country's prosperity."

"She is very beautiful," said Ormerod, and his ugly face went scarlet.

"Very," echoed Walker. "And she is one of the most intelligent persons I have ever known. Her mind is like a clear-cut crystal, receptive, incapable of distortion."

The gray eyes of the filibuster surveyed his companion with the inscrutable expression that was habitual to them.

"Mr. Ormerod," he continued, "you are a man I could work with. I should be glad to enlist you in my cause. I am equally desirous to disabuse you of any suspicions as to my motives where you are concerned. And to attain this double objective I propose to explain in detail the task I am attempting. It may be tedious, but if you can strain your patience to the necessary extent I believe you will secure a just comprehension of my intentions."

"On the understanding that I am in no way committed to you," stipulated Ormerod. "You interest me—more—than that I can say."

"More I do not wish you to say," Walker reassured him. "In a word, Mr. Ormerod, I intend to work in conjunction with the progressive elements of Nicaragua's population to assure a safe and stable development of the country's resources. It is the manifest destiny of the United States to carry a civilizing influence to the backward lands of the continent. Nowhere is there greater need of that influence than in Central America, and Nicaragua, because of its accessibility, is the logical starting-point.

"You must remember that these unfortunate people have been suffocating in a blood-bath ever since the wave of revolt against Spain lapped over Central America on the fifteenth of September, 1821, when the representatives of the five provinces of the Kingdom of Guatemala declared themselves independent. As I interpret it, Mr. Ormerod, the history of Central America—of Nicaragua—from that day has been one continuous struggle between the Liberals, who wanted a confederation of the five states, similar to our own, and the Serviles, or Clericals, or Legitimists, or Conservatives, whatever you wish to call them, who desired to restrict the rule to the aristocracy and the priesthood, and discovered the easiest road to that ambition lay through a policy of disunion. Up to the present they may be said to have won—that is, to the extent of insuring disruption."

Walker broke off to drain a glass of water.

"I trust I am not boring you?" he apologized.

"No, no," cried Ormerod. "You bring to a focus matters which I have been unable to adjust in a proper perspective. Go on, Colonel."

"President after president has set himself up in Granada or Leon," continued Walker. "Dictator has followed dictator. For twenty years, practically, the country has been at war. The male population has been reduced to a proportion of one to seven. The cities are half in ruins. Cultivation is at a low ebb. Only the natural richness of the soil prevents the people from starving—that and the commercial advantages brought to them by the Transit.

"I need not go into the whole series of revolutionary bickers. The present one is typical. In 1853 Don Fruto Chamorro, the Legitimist candidate, was elected supreme director for a term of two years under the provisions of the National Constitution of 1838. The Democrats, whose candidate was Don Francisco Castellon, claimed that Chamorro had won by bribery and contested the validity of the election. Chamorro retaliated by exiling Castellon and his chief friends, changed the Constitution and had himself reelected, under the title of president, for a term of four years.

"On May fifth, 1854, a group of Castellon's supporters landed at Realejo, proclaimed a revolution, captured Leon and declared Castellon supreme director under the Constitution of 1838. Chamorro fled to Granada, where he fortified himself, as you know. The Democrats pursued him, and laid siege to the city, and according to your tidings, Mr. Ormerod, have been compelled to retreat, with the consequence that the rival factions have reached a stalemate. It would not be very much of an exaggeration to say that that has been the situation in the country during the whole twenty years of fratricidal strife. The purposeless bloodshed has reached such a pass that men like my friend de Avila turn to the assistance of Americans with every protestation of gratitude."

"But what do you mean by 'the assistance of Americans'?" demanded Ormerod. "You are not going into Nicaragua as crusaders to die for an alien country's sake?"

"No, sir," returned Walker. "We are not. We are going as colonists—"

"To plant crops?" Ormerod did not attempt to conceal his skepticism. "Or to use rifles?"

"Technically, to plant crops," Walker answered calmly. "Actually, to use rifles. Our purpose, naturally, is an open secret. We go under the terms of a contract to which I have previously alluded. It was given to my agents by the Castellon government without any pressure having been exerted upon them."

"And after you reach Nicaragua, Colonel?"

"We shall defeat the enemies of our Democratic allies, and help to establish a strong central government."

"And then?" insisted Ormerod.

Walker shook his head.

"I cannot answer you definitely, sir—not because I am unwilling to or have anything I seek to hide, but because I do not pretend to foresee every eventuality the future holds in store. I can tell you—"

He hesitated, and his eyes gleamed with a cold, magnetic light.

"Yes, Mr. Ormerod, I can tell you what I *hope* to see happen. I hope that by means of the stimulus of American influence Nicaragua will be awakened from her slumbers, her stagnant folk put to work, her industries revived. I hope to see the contagion of her prosperity spread to her sister-states. I hope to see a realization of Morazon's dream: A Central America united, contented, busy, playing a useful part on the world's stage.

"I will go farther, and add that I hope this restored Central America will plant her flag and her prosperity in adjacent lands. Why should not Cuba be won from the heavy rule of decadent Spain? Why should not—"

"Are you envisaging a Latin-American state, Colonel Walker?" interrupted Ormerod.

"Not necessarily, sir. In its essential elements is must be American." Walker emphasized the word as heavily as Ormerod had stressed its companion. "Is it not a worthy plan? Here you have a country of more than 50,000 square miles, presenting every advantage of a sub-tropical and tropical climate, extensive grazing lands, fecund agricultural tracts, mines, and a key position in interoceanic transportation. We are not visiting it in a spirit of hostility, Mr. Ormerod. Our intentions are those of kindly instructors. We aim to make the desert bloom and the waste spring to life."

Ormerod was thrilled by the man's evident sincerity.

"It is a worthy plan," he admitted; "but are you not open to the charge of pursuing your own advantage?"

Walker dismissed the suggestion with a shrug.

"It would be strange if that were not so. Can you not imagine the indignation with which Great Britain will view so radical a spread of American influence? The prospect does not concern me, sir. What does concern me is your attitude. Will you join us, Mr. Ormerod?"

The New Yorker shook his head.

"It is impossible—"

"Nothing is impossible. Come! My plans are completed. I have my men, a quantity of arms, a ship. The date of sailing is practically fixed—a legal difficulty or two to be disposed of, that is all. We do lack funds, but that is a detail of inconsequent importance. Above all else, we need men. Men of the calibre who followed Cortez. You would find it a great experience. Far more interesting than the drudgery of the law."

"But I can not," denied Ormerod, wondering at the regret the words cost him. "You were not in the office when I explained to Mr. Garrison that Mr. Vanderbilt instructed me to return overland in order that I might report to him on the practicability of a transcontinental railroad. I must leave for the East as soon as I conveniently can."

"Ah," said Walker, "I did not understand. You are in the right, sir. I should be the last to urge any man to violate a trust. Of course, you must fulfill your mission. Do you go with one of the caravans or shall you form your own expedition?"

Ormerod blinked at the readiness with which the filibuster had relinquished an argument undertaken with such evident pains.

"I rather expect to form my own expedition," he answered. "I should lose too much time with a caravan."

"Very likely," endorsed Walker. "I fancy, Mr. Ormerod, that Tom Jenkins can be of assistance to you in securing guides and horses. May I speak to him of your intention?"

The New Yorker was bewildered.

"You—you—look here, do you really mean that?"

"Certainly. I should be pleased to be of any assistance to you," replied Walker pleasantly.

"But—but—you know, I can't possibly join you."

"Not at this time, sir. I understand that. But if at some later date our conversation recurs to you, and you discover your inclination turns to a pioneering enterprise prodigal of thankless work and hard knocks, why, I hope you will remember that William Walker invited you to join him. There will always be a vacancy on my staff for you."

Ormerod experienced a surge of pride that embarrassed and puzzled him. —— it! This was the way a grenadier of the Old Guard must have felt when the Little Corporal pulled his ear.

"That—that's fine of you," he stammered. "Honestly, Colonel, I wish I could go. I don't see much chance of ever breaking loose from the firm, though. My partner is old, and—well, I'm tied."

"Perhaps the chance will come," replied Walker, pushing back his chair. "Mr. Ormerod, there is one more thing I should like to say. I do not request you to make any set representations to your client concerning my expedition; but it must be apparent to you that Americans doing business in Nicaragua will have to reckon with me. I am not threatening. I am stating facts. My policy will be to encourage all lawful business, and naturally, so far as the law allows me and the national interest permits, I shall favor those who cooperate with me. As between Commodore Vanderbilt and Mr. Garrison and his associates, I am neutral, save as one or other affects my enterprise. But I do claim that all Americans are morally obligated to uphold my hands, inasmuch as I am working to make the country safe and profitable for them.

"Good-night, sir. If you can find it convenient to drop in tomorrow afternoon—at five, say?—very good!—I will have Tom Jenkins here, and you can consult with him as to your journey East."

Ormerod walked out of Duval's with his head in a whirl. For the first time in his life his feet were off the ground. Staid, methodical, trained to a career of routine and nice distinctions, his nostrils were twitching at the intoxicating fragrance of romance. In one month he had been torn from the ordered seclusion of New York, from the set paths of sober business and sedate pleasure, and pitched into—this!

"It was the smell of the mud at Greytown the morning the New York steamer landed us," he muttered to himself. "I knew something would happen to me then. It was a different world. And this—this is more different than Greytown."

VIII

THE little heap of gold belled on a clear, ringing note, as the gambler raked it in.

"Try your luck again, mister?" he invited.

"Not tonight," declined Ormerod, starting to elbow himself clear of the press around the table.

The gambler winked at those nearest him. "Gent's a good loser. Come again, mister." The flat voice became flatter, the expression died out of the pallid features. "Make your bets, gents! The game is made! Five—eleven—seventeen—twenty—twenty-four—twenty-nine—thirty-one—red wins. The gent that bet on the red? Here you are, mister."

Ormerod craned over the intervening shoulders to see a haggard wharf-rat scrabbling at the stakes. So easy as that the money was won and lost! A week's, a month's, yes, a year's income, as like as not. And it went with the contrasting colors—red or black. At other tables the dice ruled, the roulette-wheel spun, cards were manipulated by fingers so deft as to defy detection. But everywhere the quest was the same; easy money—or easy loss, however you wished to put it. The El Dorado was in full blast. A man had to wait his turn to get a front place at the favored tables. The jingling of silver, the clinking of gold coins, the solid thudding of sacks of "dust" played a theme through the medley of voices, hoarse, ecstatic, imploring, shrill with hope, hollow with despair.

The New Yorker viewed the scene disgustedly.

"Well, I've got that behind me," he reflected, ploughing on toward the door. "I was a good three hundred dollars ahead. And a half-eagle started me. But I'm glad it's gone. Yes, it's better gone—burn your pocket, that sort of money would—ought to, anyway."

At the door he paused for a final look.

"Might be a Bowery bar, if it wasn't for all the money—and the Chinamen. But the Commodore would never forgive me if I wasn't able to tell him what the inside of a 'Frisco gambling-hell looked like."

A grin crinkled the hard lines of his mouth.

"He'll get a laugh out of this, old Dick van Ruysdyck's partner squandering three hundred dollars at *rouge et noir!* I don't see it, though—gambling. Not for money. A man can't enjoy what he didn't earn. Or if he can I don't understand him. And as for pleasure! ——! That three hundred dollars wasn't mine, but I could feel myself sweating while the game was making. I'm glad it's gone."

He passed into the street, where a sea-fog had dropped its pearly mantle over the dim expanse of Portsmouth Square. Where now, he asked himself. This was his last night in San Francisco, and business engagements had left him scant opportunity to sample the city's resources in entertainment. He had a ticket in his pocket for a masked ball at the California Exchange—an extravagant affair, he was assured. Cabot and all the young bloods were going. It would be well under way at this hour. But then he remembered the three thousand mile journey in front of him, and the comfortable bed awaiting him in the hotel, the last comfortable bed he should know for many months. Spend the night in a hired domino, drinking champagne at ten dollars a bottle, in the stale air of a dance-hall? Or between clean sheets? Probably the last clean sheets this side of St. Louis.

Ormerod decided for the sheets. He was a young man of prosaic inclinations, in his normal mood. So he tramped through Kearney Street to Washington, and headed down toward Montgomery. There were few people abroad, and those he met usually had one hand resting on a belt-weapon; for not even a Vigilance Committee could make the city safe after dark. But Ormerod strode on without heeding such safeguards. Like many big men, naturally fearless, and unused to carrying weapons, he refused to believe that he had anything to dread from bowie-knives and six-shooters.

He had turned the corner of Montgomery Street when a woman's scream ripped the foggy darkness behind him.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

And then, in a frenzy of agony:

"Help! Oh, help! They're killing him!"

Ormerod wheeled and ran back to Washington Street. The fog and the darkness were too dense for him to be able to see anything, but the curt bark of a derringer resounded between the building up the block toward Clay Street.

"Hold the hussy, you fool," snarled a man's voice. "Want me to do everything? She nearly got me— Ouch! Look out for her teeth."

Ormerod raced on across Washington Street, and descried a shadowy group that swayed and tussled by the curb. A figure broke away from it as he came up.

"Keep off," warned a man's voice, curiously clipped. "I'll shoot."

Familiar, that English accent.

"Go on, shoot!" panted a second voice. "Shoot, Billy! Don't let him—"

A tawny streak of flame pierced the gray darkness. Ormerod had a flashing glimpse of a long, horsey face—a body prone in the gutter—two who wrestled under a tumbled mass of hair. The bullet burned his side. If it was a six-shooter— He flung himself head first and the pistol exploded harmlessly as he drove his shoulder into the Englishman's stomach. A grunt, the clatter of the weapon striking the sidewalk, and they whirled into the man and woman struggling over the inert figure in the gutter. All four crashed on the cobbles, and Ormerod, on top, hammered his fist into a mouth that belched curses beside him. The curser promptly rolled out of reach, and regained his feet with the resilience of a rubber ball.

"Come on, Billy!" he called. "Come on, you've spilled the beans. Oh, you —— fool! Come on—the whole town's roused."

The Englishman scrambled up, gasping for breath.

"Coming—wait—"

"Yes, you'll wait," exclaimed Ormerod grimly, and charged again.

The Englishman squalled desperately, and his companion bellowed:

"If you *will* have it, stranger!"

A revolver boomed and Ormerod felt the wind of a bullet in his face. Fingers tugged at his coat.

"Down, Mr. Ormerod! Don't try to follow them. Here is my pistol."

The señorita! Surely, this was the strangest adventure that had fallen to his share. But even while he strove to solve the problem of her presence his hand fastened on the stubby derringer she thrust at him. He knew less than most men about firearms, but one finger pulled instinctively at a trigger. The roar of the discharge, almost under his nose, startled him. No less did it affright his opponents. The Englishman already was running for all he was worth; the other, cursing and sputtering, tarried to take one snap-shot, which sprayed off the curbstone, and then fled. The fog swallowed them, and their footsteps receded into Clay Street.

"Is—is it Señorita de Avila?" stammered Ormerod.

"Yes. But, oh, Mr. Ormerod, my—father—"

She choked, and dropped to her knees by the silent figure in the gutter.

"What is it?" he asked blankly. "Did they—"

"They may have killed him," she answered in a restrained monotone, her fingers probing swiftly. "They struck him cruelly—before I knew what they meant—oh, his head is all blood."

Ormerod stooped beside her.

"We had better carry him away from here," he said.

Excited voices were chattering in Washington Street. People were approaching from both ends of the Montgomery Street block.

"That is true," she agreed, regaining her self-control. "And I am not anxious to have our names in *The Alta California* tomorrow morning. Could you carry him?"

"Easily," Ormerod assured her.

He lifted de Avila's frail body gently in his arms.

"Where shall we go?"

"Best take him straight to Duval's," she decided. "Colonel Walker should be there—"

Three men hailed them from across the street.

"What's happened? Anybody hurt?"

The señorita touched Ormerod's arm in sign that he should answer.

"A couple of scoundrels attacked this lady and her father," the New Yorker explained. "I don't think he's hurt very badly, but I'm carrying him to a doctor. No, thanks, I don't need any help. They? Oh, last we saw of them they were heading for the wharves."

The three inquirers responded they "reckoned we all 'll jest mosey down Clay Street a ways and see if the durned scoundrels is up to any more mischief."

Ormerod thanked them again, and strode off into Washington Street, the señorita keeping pace with him. She had pushed her hair back into its weighty black coils, and drawn a scarf over it. In the fog and the darkness few pedestrians noticed the tall young man and his burden; and those who did forebore to question. San Francisco was on the frontier, and the frontier is never inquisitive, unless it be under extreme provocation.

"Who were they?" asked Ormerod abruptly.

She glanced up at him.

"Didn't you know?"

"How should I?"

"Then why did you—" She seemed to think better of her question— "They were the two spies, Spencer and Webster."

"Oh, the pair Colonel Walker warned in the bar at Duval's! But what reason had they for attacking you?"

"Do you not think that the Legitimists would have paid handsomely for my father's death?" she countered coldly.

"Good ——, no!"

"You know very little of politics, Mr. Ormerod."

He pondered this while they traversed a block.

"And you?"

She answered him a hundred feet farther on.

"If you had not come? I suppose I should have disappeared. Or I should have been found with my father. That was why I kept the second barrel of the derringer."

"But such things couldn't happen in San Francisco!" he declared.

"Anything can happen when men are wicked enough and fortunate enough," she answered.

Ormerod shuddered.

"I am not used to this sort of thing," he said in apology.

"You are a very brave man, my friend," she replied with a simple directness that brought the blood to his cheeks.

The lights of Duval's glowed in the fog around the next corner.

"How did you know me?" asked Ormerod.

She did not pretend to misunderstand him.

"Back there? I can not say. I was sure it was not Captain von Ritterstein, and there is no one else so tall. And then you spoke. But I knew before that. I knew when you first came."

Their eyes engaged in the yellow radiance of a street-lamp, gravely, appraisingly.

"Perhaps there is a bond between us," he ventured.

"Perhaps," she assented.

The señorita opened the street door for him, wincing as the gas-jets of the lobby glared on her father's chalky face. Gone the old statesman's ivory pallor Ormerod had thought distinguished that afternoon on the Jackson Street wharf—was it only ten days since? No, no, an æon ago! A blue bruise was spread above one temple. Blood seeped from a gash in the scalp, matting the snowy hair. The mud of the gutter had befouled his dignity.

A porter drowsing on a bench snapped to interested attention—otherwise the lobby was deserted.

"Find Colonel Walker," ordered the señorita. "Tell him my father has had an accident. Ask him to come to our apartment."

She motioned Ormerod toward the stairs.

"You are sure he is not too heavy? Very well, I will go first, and show the way."

Empty corridors spoked in four or five directions from the stairhead, and midway of one the señorita threw back a door, fumbled with matches and lighted an oil-lamp on a table. The kindling wick revealed a shoddy hotel room, furniture of the pattern freighted in bulk around the Horn, a desk strewn with papers, dispatch-cases, maps, a miniature or two.

"Put him on the bed, please," she directed.

While Ormerod disposed de Avila comfortably she set up a small spirit-lamp and filled a kettle of water. From a drawer she produced a quantity of linen, and tore it rapidly into strips. And as soon as the kettle boiled she emptied it into a hand-basin, soaked a strip of cloth, and daubed the blood from the old man's features and laid bare the jagged wound in the scalp.

She was still busy at this when a knock sounded on the door, and Ormerod admitted Walker and Tom Jenkins.

"An unexpected pleasure, Mr. Ormerod," the filibuster exclaimed in his soft, drawling voice. "Señorita, your most obedient, ma'am. What is wrong?"

She pointed to the bed, with more of bitterness than she had yet exhibited.

"Webster and Spencer attacked us as we came from Don Matteo's. I think they would have killed him, but for Mr. Ormerod."

Walker's gray eyes swept the New Yorker's face as he limped into the room—he had dispensed with his crutches—and deposited a leather case on the desk.

"Destiny appears to cast your lot with us, Mr. Ormerod," he observed. "It is fortunate I delayed to fetch my instruments."

He bent over de Avila, as professionally assured as any physician Ormerod had ever seen, lifting the eye-lids of the unconscious man, feeling the wrist-pulse, prodding the battered skull with limber, sensitive fingers.

"No fracture," he pronounced. "A concussion. Rest is what he needs, and relief from the light. Cold compresses, too. But I must stitch up that scalp-wound; he will be weak from loss of blood. More hot water, if you please, Señorita. I see you have provided bandages. That's excellent. Tom, I'll ask you and Mr. Ormerod to hold Don Jaime's arms, in case he reacts to the needle."

For half an hour Ormerod watched with mounting respect this doctor-lawyer-journalist-soldier-statesman as he labored expertly at his delicate task, shaving the wound-patch, cleansing it, dressing it with salve, sewing the lips together. The filibuster was the least perturbed person in the room. Quiet, incisive, he never wasted a movement of his flying hands or spoke an inessential word. There was no flurry, no tension. Simply competence at high pressure.

"That lancet, if you please, Tom." "A little more water, Señorita." "Mr. Ormerod, I am ready for the needle."

After the bandages had been adjusted to his taste he turned to the girl, who had stayed constantly at his elbow throughout the operation.

"You must be exhausted, Señorita," he said kindly. "I advise you to permit Tom to sit up with your father. There is no danger, but his pain, I fear, will be considerable; and no advantage is to be gained by your presence. I will prepare a dose of morphia to be administered when he recovers consciousness. So take what rest—"

"I do not require any rest," she interrupted almost fiercely. "And if I did I should have no heart for it."

"You will not help Don Jaime by wearing yourself out," he cautioned.

"My room opens from this," she persisted. "I will lie down when I may."

Walker bowed.

"As you please, señorita. If you require me in the night, however, do not hesitate to send. I anticipate the morphia will suffice, but I shall be at your service."

Ormerod had kept in the background until now, but he could restrain himself no longer.

"Are you going to let those two ruffians escape, unpursued?" he demanded. "At the least, they should be reported to the city authorities."

All three regarded the New Yorker with varying degrees of astonishment. Tom Jenkins winked, and laid one finger alongside his nose.

"How you aimin' to find 'em?" he inquired.

"Tom has the right of it, Mr. Ormerod," approved Walker. "We shall, of course, notify all our friends of this outrage; but Webster is sure to have confederates in the purlieus of Broadway—"

"Sidney coves," amended Jenkins. "All thieves!"

"But the police!" cried Ormerod.

"I do not fancy that Señorita de Avila would care to have the affair confided to the police," rejoined Walker.

"Let it go," she agreed wearily. "Of what use to have the fat politicians coming to annoy us, and our troubles in every mouth? It would expose us the more readily to spies in future. No, no, keep away from the police, Mr. Ormerod."

"I shall be bound by your wishes, naturrally, señorita," rasped Ormerod. "But if I had my way, I should hunt them from here to Vancouver."

"They'll run in the other direction," said Walker. "Don't you think so, Tom?"

"Shore, they'll smuggle theirselves to Nicaragua, fust chance they git," endorsed the scout. "And afore they find a ship they'll lie low."

"Well, I'd like to get my hands on them," growled Ormerod.

Jenkins leaned down and poked a finger into the New Yorker's coat.

"Looks a leetle mite like a bullet-hole to me," he remarked. "Air you shore they didn't git something into you?"

Ormerod clapped a hand to his side, suddenly aware of a burning pain which increased as his attention was drawn to it.

"By Jove, Webster did crease me! No, it's nothing, Colonel. Not worth a look."

"I must disagree with you," Walker replied suavely. "We will excuse ourselves to the señorita, and retire to my room where I can dress it properly."

"Nonsense," protested Ormerod. "I'd rather have a few minutes more sleep than your attentions, with all due respect to you."

Before Walker could answer him, the señorita intervened.

"Please," she said, crossing the room to where he stood by the door, "you will do as Colonel Walker requests? If you did not, I should be very unhappy, worrying lest you came to harm from that wound. You had it for me, Mr. Ormerod."

She offered him her hand, and he accepted it dumbly.

"You will go with Colonel Walker?" she repeated.

"Why—yes," he agreed.

There were lines of fatigue in her face, but she summoned some untapped reservoir of vitality, and again he had the sensation of a mighty wind blowing. A current of warm strength flowed from her hand into his.

"It is good-by," he said. "I am starting overland tomorrow."

"I do not think it is good-by," she denied, and her eyes smoldered with a somber light. "You have drunk of our cup. You shall thirst for it when it is out of reach."

"What cup?" he asked, startled.

"The cup of romance," she answered, releasing her hand.

Walker and Jenkins had gone from the room; their footfalls thudded remotely on the matting of the corridor. Ormerod paused on the threshold.

"You called me friend," he said. "Will you write me how your father does? If you come safe out of this venture?"

"I will write you, friend," she promised. "As for safety, who is ever safe?"

BOOK II

NEW YORK drowsed in the morning sun, an interminable, flat expanse of red brick, bowered in greenery behind a spider's web of cordage on the spars of the shipping lying at the North River docks. Here and there a church steeple stabbed above the dead-level of roofs that stretched unbroken from the Battery to the upper edge of Greenwich Village. A faint haze of dust indicated the course of Broadway, congested with stages and drays; and far across the chimney-pots a pall of smoke hung over the machine-shops and ship-yards on the East River shore.

Ormerod, from the foredeck of the Jersey City ferry, regarded the scene with a detachment which surprized himself.

Here were permanence, a sure grip on the past, traditions, too, and the greatest assemblage of people in the New World. But westward he had seen the budding promise of achievement, forecast of a future the like of which no nation had ever known. The wild freedom of those virgin lands was a disease that set men's blood a-boiling. What? To have been accepted by pioneers for whom California was too tame! To have penetrated the intrigues of filibusters and Nicaraguan revolutionists! To have stood up to a six-shooter! To have ridden better than two thousand miles over mountains higher than the Alps, and across prairies where red savages warred and the buffalo herds thundered in avalanches of flesh and bone! And then to return from this to be one of a half-million antagonistic souls huddled in the area of a California ranch—starving, brawling, stealing, deceiving, all but a very few cramped and disheveled by the sheer poverty of life!

Ormerod sighed unhappily, and a man beside him spoke in a seesawing falsetto voice:

"Beats all, the way folks like to hive up. Seems as though there's some of 'em are never satisfied unless they can always be sure there's others as miserable as they are."

Ormerod bent his head to look down, but discovered that the speaker's eyes were on a level with his own. They were dark, dark as the señorita's, and they glowed with a kindly humor that quenched the instinctive resentment he had experienced at the interruption. Ormerod's first thought was: "Why, this man is uglier than I am!" The gnarled, pale face was riven into angular curves and furrows as if a malicious hand had chiseled it; the gaunt body was knobby with protuberant joints, its awkwardness emphasized by ill-cut garments of rusty black and a high stovepipe hat.

"That's about what was in my mind," Ormerod admitted.

The stranger nodded.

"Reminds me of a man in my State, Vince Gallup. Vince had a dandy farm a few miles out of Springfield, but he was always kicking at the loneliness of it, said he never saw a strange human from the time snow came till the ground thawed, and those that came by in summer usually were heading somewheres else. So he started in and persuaded his wife's family to move out next to him."

The narrator chuckled in his beard.

"He came in and told me about it one market day, said he guessed he'd be able to get a game of checkers once in a while and not have to listen to his wife's miseries all winter. 'Nothing like companionship,' says he. 'You can get tired of it, Vince,' says I. 'You make me tired,' says he. 'You city folks don't appreciate your advantages. You don't have to drive into the next township to say hullo.' "

He paused.

"And what happened?" prompted Ormerod.

"Just before I came East the other day Vince dropped into my office. 'Well, Abe,' says he, 'you knew more'n I did.' 'Had enough of city life?' says I. 'Great Jerushy, yes! I want for you to find me a body to buy my farm. I'm goin' to move over into Ioway, where there's elbow room.' 'Elbowroom?' says I, mighty solemn. 'Mean to say, Vince, you aren't appreciative of the companionship of your—' 'Abe,' says he, real desperate, 'I've plumb *got* to go. If I don't, you'll be defendin' me for pitchforkin' that —— mother-in-law of mine into the creek.' "

Ormerod laughed heartily. As the falsetto voice had told it the story was excruciatingly funny—yes, and more than funny, salty with the essence of man's constant struggle against adverse circumstances.

"You're a Westerner?" asked the New Yorker.

"That depends on what you mean by Westerner. Springfield, Illinois, is my home; but that isn't so far west, as the country goes nowadays."

"I stand corrected," Ormerod apologized. "I ought to have known better, seeing I'm on my way home from California."

The shambling figure straightened.

"Been to California, eh? I envy you. Why didn't you stay—if that isn't a personal question?"

"Oh, no, I went out on some law business for a client."

"Lawyer, are you? So am I. My name's Lincoln."

"Mine is Ormerod."

"Of Ormerod & van Ruysdyck?" Lincoln grinned. "I've heard of your firm. You only bother with millionaires."

"We have a good business," Ormerod assented, taking the gibe in good part. "But of course I've only been in the firm a little while."

"I'm glad to see you're a modest young man," commented Lincoln, whimsically serious. "You'll be Judge Ormerod's son? I studied his book on contracts—it read like he was an honest man. It's a strange thing, you know, but you can most always tell by the way a man writes how his mind works, and by the way his mind works you know what sort of a fellow he is."

"That sounds reasonable," Ormerod agreed. "If you're in town on business, Mr. Lincoln, I'd be glad to assist you, if I could."

"Thanks." The lambent eyes beamed with a friendliness that reminded Ormerod by contrast of Walker's cold gray ones. "But I'm passing through on my way to New England, speechifying—some of us are trying to organize a new party. Maybe you've heard of it?"

"I did hear something of it," answered Ormerod. "You mean the Republican movement, I suppose. Are you in politics, then?"

"We-e-ell," with a humorous drawl, "I was in Congress, 'till my constituents got on to me. And I do have a craving to get up in public and make an ass of myself, and the easiest way to do that is to make political speeches, isn't it?"

Ormerod shook his head.

"Somehow, I don't see you making an ass of yourself. But what are you going to do with the Whigs, Mr. Lincoln? I take it for granted you are out to form an opposition to the Democrats?"

"Just that," replied Lincoln tersely. "But we aim to snaffle quite a few Democrats before we finish. There's two big subjects the country has to wrestle with: One of 'em's the organization of the western territories, t'other's slavery—and slavery enters into the organization of the Western territories, and the organization of the Western territories is hooked up with slavery. The Whigs have pranced all 'round both subjects, afraid to offend North or South. We Republicans are going to put a clean-cut issue in front of the voters: Are you for slavery extension or are you for restriction of slavery within the States that recognize it?"

"But what about all these other new parties?" suggested Ormerod. "Locofocos, and Know-nothingism, the Liberty party, the Abolitionists?"

"They'll fly to pieces when the strain comes—too faddy, most of 'em. The Locos are disgruntled Democrats; they'll get regruntled or they'll join us. The Know-nothings are ghost-chasers; if the foreigners and the Catholic church can run this country, then, they ought to—because we Americans wouldn't deserve to have the authority. The Liberty men are Republicans under another name; they'll come in with us for the reason that our principles are more workable than their's. As for the Abolitionists, they're an honest lot of extremists, who'll never get anywheres; but we owe them a pretty considerable debt for blasting the way for us, and bringing peoples' minds to a focus."

"The way you put it," said Ormerod, smiling, "I should think we'd have a Republican President next year."

"Not quite," Lincoln rejoined good-temperedly. "But give us another four years, Mr. Ormerod."

A shadow draped the gargoyle face.

"The country is drifting—no man knows whither. For years it has been the toy of elemental forces. Either it will go on the rocks in a disaster which will shake civilization or it will be steered into paths of compromise or progress. Have you ever given thought to our national future?"

"Very little," Ormerod confessed.

"Take a stranger's advice, and try to look ahead. I am a man of very limited abilities, in sober truth, a failure. Perhaps I overestimate the perils I see. I should like to hope so, Mr. Ormerod. I should be glad to be convinced to the contrary. But there are nights I have not slept for thinking of what awaits us, of the torrents of blood that civil discord would spill."

"We have always found a compromise when North and South clashed in the past," said Ormerod.

The sorrowful eyes brooded on the New Yorker's face.

"There comes a moment to nations—as to individuals—when compromise is a worse evil than conflict."

The ferryboat bumped into the slip on the New York side, and the passengers behind the two pressed them forward against the barriers. Lincoln's eyes lighted with the friendliness that had first shone in them.

"You'll think me a confirmed speechmaker," he apologized; "but I saw something in your face that tempted me to frankness, and I make it a rule never to refuse a chance to gain a contact with a friendly man."

"I wouldn't have missed our talk for anything, Mr. Lincoln," exclaimed Ormerod. "My travels have set me to thinking, as you might imagine, and what you say, gives me a new line to explore. I'd like to see you again."

Lincoln accepted the hand he extended.

"I wish we might, but I must go to Boston as soon as I have seen Mr. Greeley."

"A friend of mine," returned Ormerod, as they began to struggle ashore. "I shall ask him about you."

"Don't be discouraged by what he reports," said Lincoln, with a cheerful grin. "The great Horace requires a magnifying-glass to see so small a political bug as I am."

The crowd eddied between them, and Ormerod dismissed the Middle Westerner from his thoughts as he tossed his bags into a cab. After all, Lincoln was only one more strange character to add to the gallery his trip had produced.

II

RUNNERS and touts for hotels, railroads and steamship lines swarmed about the ferry-landing, grabbing their bags away from travelers, brandishing placards in women's faces, fighting amongst themselves for likely patronage. A razor-back sow and a litter of piglings rooted indifferently in the middle of West Street. The crew of a Black Ball packet at an adjoining pier were getting up the headsails as a steam-tug made fast to tow her into the stream, and the husky voices roared a chantey that beat through the medley of waterfront noises like the motive of a symphony:

"A Yankee sloop came down the river,
  Hah, hah, rolling John!
Oh, what do you think that sloop had in her?
  Hah, hah, rolling John!
Monkey's hide and bullock's liver,
  Hah, hah, rolling John!"

Ormerod sank back in the cab with the indifference of familiarity. Indeed, it all seemed tame after his recent experiences. And he occupied himself in framing the terms of his report to the Commodore while he was jolted over the Belgian block paving of a side street toward Broadway. They reached the city's main thoroughfare in the midst of a sudden clanging of bells, and two policemen in linen dusters and broad-brimmed straw-hats hurled themselves at the traffic in the crossing, with plentiful oaths and much jerking of bridles.

"Phwat's the matther with ye, ye fool? Can't ye hear to the alar-rrum?" "Git back, now, do, in ——'s name, or I'll stick a fist in yer dirty mug." "Out o' the way, you 'bus! Leave the in-jines go by."

Drivers cursed back at the law's guardians; wheels locked, traces were tangled, horses neighed, plunged and kicked; an uptown 'bus canted up on the curb, and a rag-man's rickety cart was overset; one of the constables became involved in a personal debate with a truckman of his own nationality, and soon came to blows, with the consequence that a delighted circle formed about the pair and chivvied them on. Pedestrians fled into shops; women screamed; small boys yelled gleefully; and the street-dust billowed to the house-tops.

In the midst of the confusion a column of red-shirted young men plunged into Broadway, hauling on the ropes of a high-sided pumping-engine, with coils of hose hooked to the levers.

"Hy-yi! Snatch her on!" they shouted in chorus. "Twenty-eight, twenty-eight! We're the boys that's never late."

Ormerod leaned out of the cab-window with his first show of interest.

"Was that the Golden Hill Company?" he asked the cabby as the red column skilfully snaked a path through the whirlpool.

The cabby growled an assent.

"Might think they owned the streets, them and the —— consta-bules."

"Well, they do get there," returned Ormerod exultantly. "I used to run with them, myself. Somebody's got to put fires out, haven't they?"

"Aw, if they do, they needn't be so obstrepshous. I'm lucky my old nag didn't bust a swivel-bolt—and you can be thankin' the dear God you wasn't turned over on the blocks, which I've knowed happen more than wanst."

A second company passed, and to an accompaniment of shouting, threats and bad language the harassed traffic finally reintegrated itself, and Ormerod's cab continued eastward across Broadway. And now he forgot entirely the detachment which had possessed him on the ferry, crouching on the edge of his seat, eyes staring out of the right hand window for the first sight of the ancient red-brick building he called home. Ah, there it was! He had a glimpse of its rear diagonally across a smaller intervening house, with the poplars in the back-garden waving their plumey tips high over the surrounding chimneys—an aristocrat of unbroken fortunes holding itself proudly aloof in the society of decrepit structures which had succumbed to commerce.

They rounded the corner, and Ormerod leaped to the street, snatched out his bags and threw a fifty-cent piece on to the box-seat, and had gained the doorstep, all before the cabby could say, "Here you are." The man was still gaping up at him when he unlatched the door with his pass-key, and slipped from the hot glare of the street into the cool interior of a wide, darkened hall.

Rooms opened on either hand, to his left the dining-room, the dull sheen of mahogany, the bright glitter of silver, mysterious in the shadows; opposite, the parlors, where portraits hung beneath mosquito-netting, and the weapons of fighting ancestors formed a trophy above the fireplace.

"Is it you, Miss Lydia?" called a voice from the dining-room. "Ah, Blessed Saints, that Biddy will be afther leavin' the door—"

A tiny bit of a woman, with a wizened brown face like a weathered russet-apple, popped into the hall.

" 'Tis Misther Payter!" she gasped. "Now glory be to God! And are ye whole in your body?"

Ormerod caught her up in his arms, hugged her until she squealed and then hoisted her by the elbows.

"Stop it, do," she commanded, between laughter and tears. "Will ye never grow up? Ah, now, be aisy wid me. I'm not as young as I was—and 'tis little ye know of your stren'th that—"

"Not as young as you were!" mocked Ormerod. "Norah Connolly, there's many a young girl would give a slice of her luck for the light in your eyes and the lilt in your brogue."

"Blarney," she retorted, gingerly tapping her feet on the floor he lowered her to. "Well ye know ye must speak quick to fend me from taxin' ye for never sendin' so much as a line of writin'. Yes, and why couldn't ye spend the Commodore's money on a teleygram, if ye was too lazy for a letter? And why didn't ye let even Miss Lydia hear from ye? Day by day she's been to the door, and the last time no later than yesterday mornin', wid her kind face and her thinkin' for others. 'And how's your rheumytism, Norah?' says she. 'Won't ye let me take ye up to the Manor for a week or two? Phwat do ye hear from Misther Payter?' And what could I be tellin' her? Just nothing."

Ormerod looked uncomfortable.

"I've had little leisure for writing," he said. "I was only ten days in San Francisco, and the rest of the time I was traveling."

"Well, ye could have written, if ye was minded to," she reproved him. "There's them could find the time," she added darkly.

"What do you mean?"

She stepped to a table by the door, and lifted a sealed letter, which he accepted from her with surprize.

"For me? Did the office send it?"

"They did not. It came to the house." She frowned at him. " 'Tis from San Francisco, and I misdoubt 'tis from some furrin woman by the hand of write."

The señorita! His heart pounded as he went into the front-parlor, and raised one of the drawn shades to scrutinize the thin packet. The seal bore a Spanish motto under an armored horseman, lance in rest: "*Si Dios quiere.*" He had enough Spanish to translate it: "If God wills." Appropriate for a family like de Avila's!

He slit the envelope flap, and the oblong sheet fluttered open in his hand, the writing slanting across it with the precision of a geometric design.

He read:

DEAR FRIEND,

I write, as I promised, to assure you that by God's mercy my father has recovered from his injuries. He thanks you by me, and bids me say that we shall be ever in your debt, for he who gives life can be paid only with life. We go from here at the end of the week by the Transit steamer to Nicaragua. Colonel Walker left some days since in the brig *Vesta*, with but fifty-eight men. Our enemies raised such difficulties to his departure by recourse to the courts with claims of debts and libels that it was necessary for him to sail by stealth and without his full company. But a few with courage may overcome an army of cravens. In any case, we shall put our destiny to the touch.

A Dios! From your friend,

MARIA DE AVILA Y CANEDO.

I had your address from Mr. Cabot. He said that you should be one of us. I told him that you were.

The cadence of her voice throbbed in his ears as he scanned the lines containing—"one of us"—and—"you were." They rang with the same calm certainty as her prediction that he should thirst for the cup of romance. In the past three months action and adventure had crowded out any craving for romance, but what counter-lure should he find in the turgid life of the city?

"Will ye learn it by heart?" demanded Norah angrily.

He was amazed at the hostility in her face.

"It's only a letter from a friend."

"A friend, is it? That may be so, but I never seed ye afther readin' a *friend's* letter wid the heart ye put into that."

She jabbed a finger at the offending sheet as she would knife its writer.

"Here, read it, Norah," he said curtly.

She was nonplussed.

"I'll not be dabblin' in what doesn't concern me."

"But you've made it concern you." He smiled, and pressed the letter on her. "Go ahead, read it. It's from a Central-American lady I met in San Francisco. I was able to help her and her father when some enemies attacked them in the street. They were exiles from their country, you see—and she's written me to say they are going home."

"Exiles! Do ye tell me so? Well, well, me that's Irish can find a bond wid her there. And a fine hand of write she has. Humph! Humph! 'Tis a strange love-letter, by all I ever knew of such—"

"A love-letter!" protested Ormerod. "Nonsense! There's nothing of love in it."

Norah sniffed.

"Ye've not told me she's old. And would ye ask me to believe aany woman, wid the fire of life in her, will throuble to write to a young man these maany thousand miles off, and her wid no question into her heart? Don't fool yourself! I know how it worrks. 'Is he?' says she. 'Or ain't he?' says she. And so she writes—and I'll admit 'tis a proper, ladylike letter."

She handed it back to him, and reached up and stroked his cheek.

"God be good to ye—and to Miss Lydia—and herself that writ ye, poor lass. I misdoubt her life's a hard wan."

Ormerod kissed her.

"You're romancing, Norah," he said. "Look here, can I get some hot water? I want to wash up before I go to the office. And are my clothes in the closet?"

"I've had all ready for ye every day for the last week," she returned triumphantly. "There was something told me ye was comin'. Sure, we know, we women do, Misther Payter. Come along, and I'll fix a clane shirt for ye."

III

HALFWAY down theside street Ormerod followed to Broadway a gilt sign on the peeling green paint of a ramshackle stable announced it to be the headquarters of "Golden Hill Engine Co. No. 28, V. F. D." The returned traveler noted curiously that in place of the usual mob of loafers in front a single dark-browed youth leaned against the open double-door, chewing meditatively at a straw.

"What are you doing here all by yourself, Mike Gilligan?" he called.

The straw chewer looked up, goggled desperately and then detonated in a brogue compared with which Norah Connolly's was thin and flavorless.

"Misther Orrm'rod! And when did ye get back? Glory be, the b'ys was talkin' about ye yestiddy. Did ye fight wid the Injuns? Did ye get us them buff'ler skins for the company-room? What like is Californy? Was there gold by the way ye came?"

He seized Ormerod's hand in the midst of his questions, and pumped as if he was manning one of the levers of the glistening engine visible across the threshold of the fire-house.

"Take it slow," exclaimed Ormerod, laughing. "The Kiowas tried to run off our horses one night, but we never had a real look at them; and once a small Sioux war-party followed us—but they sheered off after we joined a Government train. There's two prime skins for you somewhere this side of St. Louis. As for California, all the gold I saw was in bars and gambling-houses. It's a great country, Mike, but you've got to work there just as you have to in New York—unless you belong to a fire company."

Gilligan winked shamelessly.

"Och, there's Alderman Regan does be shwearin' he'll have me on the new water-works! And why should I be wearin' the flesh off me bones when life is aisy, if ye but take it so."

"But what are you doing here, alone?" reiterated Ormerod.

"Sure, we jest come in from a broth of a run! More by token, them bloody Sixies set the fire for a chancet to show up their new pump, and knowin' 'twere set they come firrst, and but that we took our fists to 'em they'd never have let us lay in."

"Number Six set the fire?" interrupted Ormerod. "You know, Mike, some of you boys will get in trouble one of these days. The city won't stand for that kind of thing indefinitely."

The red-shirt adopted an injured expression.

"Aw, it was no more than a shed—down beyant Slaughter's Rintz, in back of the Five Points. The city's well rid of it. Well, aannyhow, we had a good run and as pretty a fight as ye'd like to see—the best I mind since we mixed it wid them English sailors the day the wharf was afire in South Street—and so the b'ys was warm in their t'roats, and they're all around in Muller's saloon, leavin' me on watch."

He swaggered a bit over his conclusion. Ormerod clapped a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"Be sure *you* don't try setting fires so Number Twenty-eight can make a record run," he advised. "Oh, I know how that kind of thing happens—an idle day, a few drinks, a bet, maybe—and it's lucky if they pick an empty house. You'd better let me find you a real job."

"Ah, your honor's afther manein' well," returned Mike; "but I've lashin's of time for work to come. And twhere'd the city be if 'twasn't for us b'ys that run wid the companies, and is always 'round when we're naded?"

Ormerod had to laugh at the repetition of the stock argument he, himself, had employed with the cabby.

"All right, Mike," he said. "Drop in and see me some evening when you're not busy. I brought you a pair of moccasins and a pipe-case."

Mike Gilligan's protestations of thanks pursued him as far as the corner, but Ormerod scarcely heard them. He was considering seriously the idle tale he had listened to, and the implications to be drawn from it. New York had its venturesome wastrels no less than San Francisco. The country was blessed—or cursed—with a superabundance of vitality, a surplus of reckless youth, who disdained the dull paths of livelihood city and farm extended to them, and, failing the opportunity of pioneering, must turn their energies to wanton destruction and rioting. Put Mike Gilligan and his pals on the prairies, and they would become splendid plainsmen, trappers, hunters and Indian fighters. Send them to San Francisco, and most of them—after an initial spree of mucking at the mines—would gravitate instinctively to such enterprises as Walker's.

The shambling figure of the Illinois lawyer—what was his name? Oh, yes, Lincoln!—recurred to him, and he stopped at the corner of Broadway, his head buried in thought, as he conned over the man's odd prophecy, if prophesy it could be called. He had forgotten entirely his errand for Vanderbilt, when a bluff voice boomed in his ears, and strong fingers bit into his arm.

"My young friend, Ormerod! Well, well, traveler, and how did you find the Transit? Great doings in Nicaragua, I see by the paper."

It was George Law—"Live-oak George" New York called him, in tribute to his boisterous virility—as bluff in manner as in speech, sandy-complexioned, chunky, a piledriver in boots, saying what he thought, doing what he pleased, one of the few men who could boast that he had had the better of Commodore Vanderbilt—in the famous race between his steamer *Oregon* and the *Commodore Vanderbilt* from New York to Croton Point on the Hudson, and return. Steamboat man, banker and dabbler in railroads and the street-car lines people were beginning to talk about, Law had established the first passenger line to Chagres, had helped to found Aspinwall and to build the railroad across the Isthmus of Panama.

He had his finger in many pies. It was he, who, when the Spanish authorities at Havana refused to permit one of his steamers to touch there because of articles on the Cuban situation written by her purser, had first appealed to the administration at Washington for diplomatic or naval assistance to make the Spaniards back down; and when the Administration refused, and even withdrew the mails from the steamer and advised passengers of the risk they ran in shipping on her, he had sent her to

Havana in ballast, with the offending purser aboard.

"I'll show these —— dagos they can't bluff George Law!" he said. "Let the Government trim. I can take of myself."

The Spaniards had threatened to sink Law's steamer the moment she came under the Morro's guns, but when she appeared she was not molested; and New York generally, and all Americans who loved a man who was willing to fight his own battles, shouted with glee.

"How are you, Mr. Law," replied Ormerod. "What's this about Nicaragua, though?"

Law waved a copy of the morning's *Herald* in his face. The right-hand column of the front page displayed heavy black headlines:

"BATTLE IN NICARAGUA—FILIBUSTERS DEFEATED AT RIVAS—COLONEL WALKER'S LITTLE FORCE SUFFERS GRAVE LOSSES—SPECIAL DISPATCH FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT AT GREYTOWN RECEIVED VIA STEAMER WEBSTER."

Ormerod ran a hasty eye down the close-printed story below the heading, his heart sinking lower and lower toward his boots. It was a pitiful story, heroic, but tragic in its message of failure.

"See for yourself," said Law jerkily. "I've heard of this fellow, Walker—the man who tried to take Sonora, isn't he? Thought so! Must be a fighting fool. I never heard of such a thing—had fifty-five white men and a hundred native troops. Started out to attack Rivas, a fortified town, with a garrison of six hundred, and some artillery, apparently. Native troops desert him at the start, but he fights his way almost to the Plaza, hangs on there in a couple of houses until he's lost eighteen men killed and wounded—eighteen out of fifty-five, by ——!—and then fights his way clear. The *Herald* says the Legitimists in Rivas lost close to a hundred and fifty men. There's a soldier for you!"

"But he was defeated," Ormerod answered blankly. "And eighteen out of fifty-five! That leaves him thirty-seven men. He's a remarkable character, Mr. Law, but he can't conquer Nicaragua with thirty-seven men."

"Know him, eh?" demanded Law.

"I met him in San Francisco. He was planning this enterprise then. He—"

Ormerod remembered that Law was a financial rival of the Commodore's, who had once been substantially interested in steamships and might be again, and he broke off, studying the *Herald's* news-story for a hint of the possible effect of Walker's catastrophe upon the Transit Company. Ha! At the bottom of the column was a single line that told him what he was seeking:

IT IS BELIEVED HERE THAT WALKER WAS REALLY STRIKING FOR CONTROL OF THE TRANSIT WHEN HE ATTACKED RIVAS. AMERICANS WHO BROUGHT THE TIDINGS OF THE BATTLE DOWN THE SAN JUAN RIVER REPORT THAT HE IS ANXIOUS TO RECRUIT HIS FORCES FROM THE STREAM OF TRAVELERS PASSING TO AND FRO BETWEEN CALIFORNIA AND THE EAST.

Law regarded him shrewdly.

"Don't want to give away the Commodore's secrets, eh? Well, I don't blame you—especially, if he has a stake in this."

"He hasn't," Ormerod returned. "I happen to know that for a fact."

"And I suppose Garrison and Morgan haven't, either!" jeered Law.

"I'm as positive that they haven't as I could be of anything."

Law scowled at the newspaper.

"They're all fools," he growled. "I know what you went West for, my boy, and so does every one in Wall Street by this time; the Commodore has been raising particular —— with the Transit crowd. And if I'd been in your shoes, with a chance to hook up with a man like Walker and take over the whole of Nicaragua as a going concern, lock, stock and barrel, the Transit included—Well, I'd not be standing here, talking."

Ormerod was interested.

"What makes you feel so strongly about it?" he inquired.

"The wits the Lord gave me!" roared Law. "Look at the country! It's bound to grow. Central America's the place to grow in. We need the access between the two oceans. We need the products, which don't compete with our own. We've got the men to take it over and administer it. What more do you want?"

"It's a good argument," admitted Ormerod; "and there are plenty of men in California who'll agree with you."

"In California—of course!" Law blinked craftily. "And in the South, my boy. Yes, by the eternal, here in New York, too—although the town is going to the dogs, run to a bedlam by these cursed foreign immigrants. Never saw anything like it. Our own people are all moving west; and the scum of Europe are taking their places.

Ormerod returned him the newspaper.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Law, but I must be getting downtown. I'm just in from California, and I haven't seen the Commodore yet."

"Haven't, eh? Well, you tell him what I said. A man like Walker ought to be turned to account. Oh, and by the way, Ormerod, are you going to van Ruysdyck's tonight?"

"I—I—don't know," replied Ormerod uncertainly. "I haven't been to the office yet. I—"

"Oh, you'll be there," Law assured him with a knowing grin. "Quite a party on. I'm bringing a chap named Henningsen—Englishman, soldiered a bit. Good man for you and the Commodore to know, eh? And you needn't worry about Miss Lyddy—he's married—charming widow, Georgian, heaps of money. Well, the Union for ever, boy!"

IV

ORMEROD chuckled as several bulky law volumes thudded on the floor, and van Ruysdyck's fussy "tut-tut-tut" prefaced the ejaculation:

"Don't scare a man to death! My dear Peter! This is a great relief. Lydia and I were saying at breakfast that if we had no word from you this week I must telegraph the Army people at Fort Leavenworth and get them to send out a search-party. A successful trip, my boy?"

"All that could be expected, I believe, Dick," Ormerod answered with genuine affection.

There was a wide gap between their ages, but Ormerod's attitude toward his partner was brotherly rather than filial. In fact, in many ways Ormerod was mentally the elder of the two. Van Ruysdyck, insistently dignified—pompous, according to those who didn't like him—had no real flair for the law; he was a born land-owner, excessively proud of his ancestral estate and defunct patroon rights, who had been diverted by early ambition to a professional career, and had succeeded therin by dint of family influence, a gift for unremitting labor and attention to details and the fortuitous circumstance that he had gained the partnership of Judge Ormerod, one of the ablest lawyers of the day. And now that the Judge was dead, the local bar whispered his son was by way of becoming the source of inspiration "Old Dick" needed.

In person van Ruysdyck was a sturdy, middle-aged man, with a plump, pinkish face, a small, stubborn mouth and a pair of very mild light-blue eyes. He was extremely careful in his dress, securing all his clothes from a London tailor who had outfitted his father and grandfather, and this morning was resplendent in light-weight gray homespun trousers, strapped under patent-leather boots, and a shortwaisted blue frock coat, with a white flower in the buttonhole. His neckcloth, which was open to the aspersion of being old-fashioned, was of figured silk. A white beaver and a gold-headed cane lay on a small side-table.

"That's good. The Commodore has been asking for you—sent Wardell here yesterday to see if we'd heard anything. He's been cleaning up all the loose Transit stock, must have a goodish block of it in his safe, and he wants to hear from you before he sinks any more money. I trust he isn't on a wild goose chase?"

"Being the Commodore, he probably is not," returned Ormerod, grinning. "The Transit was running smoothly when I crossed Nicaragua, and I'm blessed if I can see how anybody is going to build a railroad to the Pacific until we plant a few million people the other side of the Mississippi."

"Ah! Humph! I dare say," said van Ruysdyck vaguely. "A very wild country, I take it."

"Bad," agreed Ormerod. "Mountains you can hardly get wagons over. Distance—I never believed there was so much land in the world! But speaking of Nicaragua, I suppose you saw the story in the *Herald* this morning?"

"Oh! A fight some American adventurer figured in? Yes, I did. But I fail to see what that has to do with the Transit, Peter. The truth is, you know, the Mexican War and this whole Western adventure have unsettled people. Why, only a few weeks ago a man named Kinney, from Texas, I believe, was in difficulties with the Federal authorities here over a filibustering expedition to Greytown. He got away by trickery a month or so since—with an army of thirteen men! Men like him and this other fellow—Walker, is it?—are lunatics. Business has nothing to expect from them. They are actuated by vanity and an ambition which lawful means cannot satisfy."

Ormerod picked up his hat. If old Dick was going to make a speech he had to move quickly or expect to put in the morning listening to it.

"Perhaps you are right," he said. "But I'd better get on to the Commodore's. Was there anything else?"

Van Ruysdyck pulled at his fluffy blond sidewhiskers.

"No—er— Oh, yes, you'll come to dinner tonight, won't you? Lydia has a party on. She wouldn't leave me this summer, insisted on staying in town. Confound it, you might think I wasn't able to take care of myself!"

Ormerod had an unaccountable sensation of awkwardness.

"Well, no more you are, Dick," he parried. "But that's like Lydia; she takes her responsibilities seriously, doesn't she?"

"She ought to be up at the Manor," grumbled van Ruysdyck. "Did you say you were coming? Greeley promised to, and George Law is bringing a friend. Everybody will want to hear of your adventures—I suppose you had some, didn't you?"

"My fair share, I guess," replied Ormerod, moving toward the door. "Yes, I'll come, thanks. We must persuade Lydia to go up-river. The city's no place for her, this weather."

In the outer office he ran through a stack of mail that had accumulated on his desk, and presently found himself in Broadway again, strolling south under the dusty trees. He crossed Bowling Green to Number Five, and entered the building beneath an unpretentious sign, which contained the curtly arrogant announcement:

CORNELIUS VANDERBILT

On the stair landing he heard footsteps descending, and hugged the wall to leave room for the departing caller; a distinct odor of Bourbon prompted him to glance at the man. The light was dim, but the shifty, sidewise glint of the eyes was familiar. And that bottle nose!

"Spencer!" he eclaimed. "What are you doing—"

The shifty eyes glistened; the descending one quickened pace convulsively. Ormerod turned to pursue, then thought better of it. Spencer already had reached the door; on the threshold he looked back once—and meeting Ormerod's puzzled gaze, suddenly began to run.

"No use starting a chase in Broadway," reflected Ormerod. "I'd look silly. But what was the scoundrel doing here? I must warn the Commodore against him. By Jove, though, it's queer!"

He resumed his climb with a divided mind, and accepted absently the bland greetings of Lambert Wardell, the Commodore's confidential clerk, who was as famous for his manners as his employer was for lack of them.

"This is indeed a pleasure, Mr. Ormerod! I hope I see you well? Your appearance, if I may say so, is excellent. You would seem to be very hardy, sir. A strenuous time, I make no doubt. And successful? Ah, that is good news, sir, good news."

"And the Commodore—"

"Go right in, Mr. Ormerod. He would not have you kept waiting a moment, I am sure. Go right in. He has been speaking of you frequently of late. We have all been wondering how you were succeeding. A very interesting trip, to be sure. Yes? Ah! Of course, of course!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Circe

By R. E. Alexander

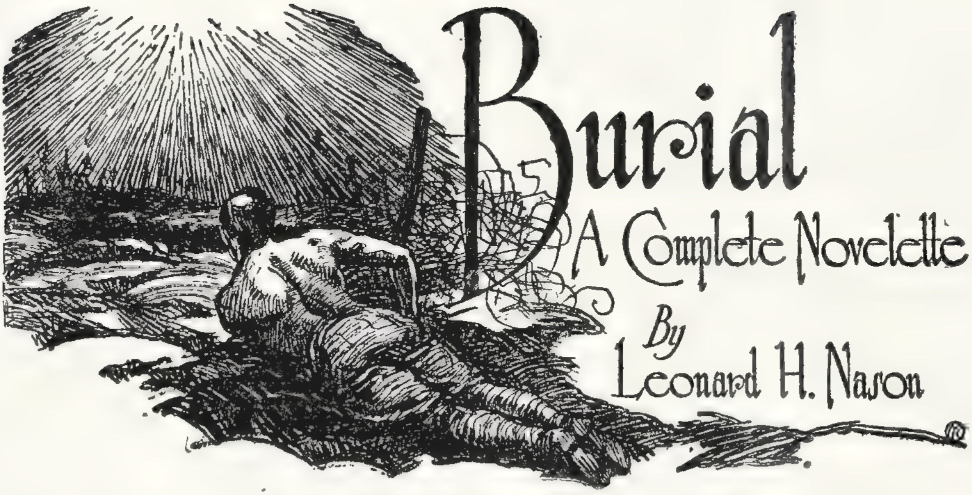
THE bright face of Danger is lifted, and a smile
Is on the full lips, saying: “Come, walk with me a mile.
Before that mile is finished you’ll ask to make it twain;
There are virgin roads enough by dry land and main.

“Leave the cozy inglenooks to such as love their ease;
For me, for you, the outlands—all yet unbridled seas.
The cooking-fires for women, the untried, and the spent;
For you, for me, the vanguard, and a bow full-bent!

‘I was guide to Jason, and I rode at Cortes’ side;
I smiled on wise Ulysses, and he turned him from his bride:
What’s the soft and silken couch, the white bread, and wine,
To bed and board I offer all the greatheart line?

“What an I have mounds to tend in a secret place?
Not one that sleeps beneath is sad, remembering my face.
I kissed them full upon the lips in their last hour of earth,
And not a man of them but smiled—they had wailed at birth!

“Oh, will you walk a mile with me, who was beloved of men,
In the old days, the wild days will surely come again:
Will you lie soft and tread dull round and hold the penny pose,
When I have new-old roads for you—and enough stout blows?”



Burial

A Complete Novelette

By
Leonard H. Nason

Author of "The Bold Dragoon," "The Arab," etc.

A ROLLING plain, silent, black, and forbidding. The cold glittering stars of late winter looked down like the eyes of a great audience at a play. There was a play going on there, in which the actors crawled about in the mud, and cut each others' throats, and sat up all night lest they be slain in their sleep. For all the good that either the sitting up or the throat-cutting did for any of them, they might just as well have been in their beds.

One of the actors lay on his belly in the mud on the parapet of a trench. The trench was really a ditch, or more properly a drain, since it was half full of water. From the parapet, the ground sloped down to the wire, and out beyond the wire into a half-mile space that belonged to no one and was given over to the crows and the rats and to stinking dead things.

Beyond this space were the enemy trenches, and the man on his stomach in the mud was watching for unwelcome guests from them. The wire was hung with old crockery and tin cans, so that any disturbance of the strands would make a hideous noise, but there were lanes through it and a cautious man, armed with skill and a pair of wire cutters, could get through. Hence the guard, shivering in the bitter wind.

The guard rubbed his eyes and swore softly to himself. He thought he could see moving shapes out there, but when he tried to make certain of the fact, the shapes were gone.

"There's some one monkeyin' in that wire," he whispered to himself, "I'll bet a hat."

Black shapes formed and melted away before his eyes. One moment he could swear something moved, the next there was nothing there at all.

The Very lights that went up at intervals were of no assistance, for when the hummocks and shell holes of the waste between the lines were outlined in the blinding whiteness of the flare, there were so many things to look at that might be Germans, that the guard was worse off than he had been in the darkness.

Finally he wriggled backward, so that his legs hung down into the trench, and called huskily—

"Hey, Chief, give us a spell, will you?"

From the blackness of the trench came a rustle of a slicker, the soft *squdge-squdge-squdge* of feet moving through deep water, and a faint crackling where the splashing water washed the newly formed ice from the trench wall. A helmeted figure rose suddenly from the dark and in a bound was up the muddy slope and on the parapet, where he lay down beside the other.

"It's time I give my eyes a rest," said the first man. "I'm seein' things out there. Give us a call when you get cold an' I'll come up again."

"Awright," replied the newcomer. "You won't get much sleep. Dat win', she's freeze dose wet blankets lak board."

The first man swore and slid down into

"Burial," copyright, 1926 by Leonard H. Nason.

the water. He felt along the trench a few feet and lifting a blanket that hung like a curtain, crawled on to a shelf cut into the front wall of the trench. He burrowed under the sodden blankets and was sleepily cursed by the other occupant of the shelf. Then, arranging as best he might the outermost blanket, which was frozen stiff, he tried to sleep.

Meanwhile the other man, instead of remaining on the parapet, slid silently and noiselessly down the slope to the wire. Wriggling and squirming like a snake, he made his way along one of the lanes and then stopped.

From here the ground rose again, so that the man in the wire could see any one that came toward him when he crossed the crest, since he would be silhouetted against the skyline. It was much easier to see from here, looking up against the sky, than from the parapet, looking down into the darkness.

The soldier lay quietly in the cold wind, looking and listening. Flares went up regularly from the German lines and once in a while from the trench in back of the guard. The Americans were very cautious in their use of lights, lest they give away the position of a P.C. or something equally important, for the flares were fired by either the platoon commander or the platoon sergeant, and wherever either of these men sat down was the head of the table, so to speak.

Who was this man that went down into the wire and kept vigil there, instead of on the parapet where be belonged? He came from the northern woods of Maine and was by profession a guide. His name was Key-o-nik Peter.

He had no real family name, but had been called Peter since he was a child. The first part of his name was his real one and was the one his mother had given him. In the Micmac tongue, it signified "the Otter."

The Otter was a full-blooded Micmac, a tribe of New Brunswick Indians, and the Otter's parents, for reasons of their own, had gone down into Maine when the Otter was still strapped to a board and carried on his mother's back. His father assumed the rights and obligations of an American citizen and the Otter did likewise, although he had nothing to say about it, being at that time unable to talk.

When he grew older, the Otter became a guide like his father before him. For fourteen consecutive years the Otter had been hired by a New York man named Sutherland, a man possessed of oil wells and railroads and much filthy lucre.

In the spring preceding the fifteenth autumn, Mr. Sutherland wrote that he would not hunt that season—that he had bigger game in mind. He mentioned that he was colonel of a regiment of organized militia and must go to war with them.

The Otter learned, upon inquiry, that the United States had decided that the time had come to take off its coat and mix into the fight that was merrily going on in Europe.

That season there were few applications for guides. The Otter thereupon decided on a course of action and got out his school copybook, which also served as dictionary. Then he indited the following letter to Mr. Sutherland:

> DEAR SIR.
> I have no work this season. Can you give me work in your . . . .

The compilation of this message took the better part of a day and the Otter's tongue was very weary from its many twistings and cheek pokings when the last word had been copied.

The message was not yet complete, for it lacked a word. The Otter betook himself to the post office in the village, a mere jaunt of fifteen miles, and from the recruiting poster copied the word he sought, "army." Then he mailed the letter and awaited results.

Several days later, in response to a telegram, he took his departure for a mysterious place called Camp Merritt, amid the forests of New Jersey. One last word about the Otter. He had a Bible printed in Micmac, which he read devoutly. At sunrise and sunset he sang some kind of hymn to some heathen deity of the Micmacs. It would seem that the Otter was not as thorough a Christian as he might be.

SO THEN, upon this winter night, the Otter listened patiently. His ears that were accustomed to the sounds of the forest and his eyes that were trained to pierce the night, and which were almost as strong as an animal's, were of immense value at the front and especially on duty such as he was on now.

There were too many confusing noises, though. The wind moaned through the many strands of barbed wire, there were little rustling sounds where the fat rats ran about in the dead grass. Sounds of water splashing and gentle snores came from the trench behind him.

However, things were not so difficult after all. No one could cross the little ridge without being seen and after all his only duty was to give the alarm.

At the approach of dawn the Otter crawled back into the trench. The men were splashing around in the darkness, blowing on their hands and moaning of stiffened joints. It was the hour of stand-to, when the entire garrison of the trench lay on the parapet, the automatic rifles were prepared for action and the machine guns set up. For an hour before daybreak these men must be on the alert, for the hour before the dawn is the darkest of the night and is therefore the time when most attacks in force are made.

"Ain't it c-c-cold!" whispered the man next to the Otter, through hammering teeth.

"Yep," agreed the Otter. "She's pretty col'. But so long's she don' rain, not so bad. On de udder han', when she's rain, Boche stay home an' not come on our trench."

"You scared o' the Boche, Chief?"

"Naw, I ain' scared of heem, but I ain't look for no trouble. Too much ess enough and dose Boche bad fellar."

After that all was still, except for the rustle of a slicker as some one moved, or the quick panting of a soldier blowing on chilled fingers. When the posts of the wire became visible and the soldiers suddenly noticed that near-by objects were dimly discernible, the garrison clambered down off the parapet and, without command, filed slowly along the trench and back into the town. Their duty was ended until sunset.

"You stayin' up, Chief?" inquired the Otter's companion.

"Yep, I come up hearly, you know, and in night-time fin' out what I gon' snipe nex' day."

"Well, if you ain't a bear for work I never seen one!"

The Chief grinned but made no answer. Then he flattened himself against the trench wall, so that the men could pass by on their way out.

The trench that this company garrisoned ran in front of a small town. Though there had been fighting there for four years, a considerable number of the houses were still standing. The right of the trench was in a cemetery and ran down one of the old paths. Shells had violated many of the graves.

The left part of the trench was in the fields. During the day the garrison went back into the town and slept in the houses, leaving sentry posts of seven men at intervals in the trench.

These posts consisted of four men armed with rifles, an automatic rifleman, a man with a rifle equipped to throw grenades, and a corporal. They must remain awake and vigilant all day.

When the trench had been cleared, the Otter went into a bay where the squad was grouped about the corporal.

"Oscar, you and McBride take the first watch. Red, you and Smitty go get the chow. You know where that wash-house is just this side the bridge? The kitchen's in there. The rest o' you guys git outta sight and after we eat you can git some sleep. You birds on watch keep an eye open for the looey, and give us a chance to git awake."

"Don't bring us back none o' that sour slum like we had yesterday," said McBride, as the men handed over the canteens to be filled with coffee. "An' don't get yourself shot either. I don't yearn to go hungry all day."

"Yeh," agreed the corporal. "You better get a move on. They can see that road Mont Sec and they might throw an egg at you. Beat it now before it gets too light. If you see any Frogs, get us some *vin rooge.*"

The ration detail went its way and the Otter went on down the trench to get his mess-kit.

"Hey, yuh know that Chief's been up all night and now he's gonna snipe all day," exclaimed McBride.

"And I bet he knocks over a good few," remarked the corporal. "He used to be guide for the colonel and the colonel's son. That's how come he got in the army, because I know —— well he's over age. Even so, he's got eyes like fifty cats. He's a queer old bird, the Chief is. He wouldn't have got in the Army, only the colonel knew him and got him by."

"That Lieutenant Sutherland is a good lad, even if he is the colonel's son," remarked Oscar.

"He is that," agreed the other two. "Ain't none better. He's kinda too full of enthusiasm, though," added the corporal. "He wants to win the war all by himself.

If I was his old man I wouldn't let him go up round the front at all."

After a time the ration detail returned in safety, bringing canteens of coffee, corned willie, two round loaves of bread, and a can of tomatoes.

"How come only one can of tomatoes?" demanded the corporal.

"Only one can to a squad," said Red, one of the chow toters. "Ain't that what he said, Smitty?"

"Yep," said Smitty.

The other members of the squad appeared and regarded their food with little enthusiasm.

"Is that all?" asked one of them, with every indication of disgust.

"What the —— do you expect? A full course dinner?" asked the corporal. "This is better than the Jerries are gettin', anyway."

"Maybe so, but I'm gettin' pretty sick o' cold horse all the time. If it ain't that, it's sour slum. I claim that's poor stuff to get killed on, ain't it, Chief?"

The Otter chewed meditatively.

"Can't kick," he said finally, "when you get dose chow free from charge."

The squad proceeded to eat and then the first one through relieved McBride at the periscope.

"Wadda yuh see out there?" he inquired, as he took the long wooden box from McBride's hand.

"Cleopatra takin' a bath," said McBride. "What would you guess I could see?"

"Needn't get sore. Might be a couple o' workin' parties, maybe some new stiffs. Why not?"

"Well, you take an eyeful. You ain't blind, are you?"

"When you goin' to start snipin', Chief?" asked the corporal.

"Pretty quick, you bet," replied the Otter.

"Do us a favor, will you? Don't get in back of this post or anywhere near it. Then we won't get any of the fruit and vegetables that gets thrown at you. Stand by, all! Here comes some one!"

A sound of splashing came from the next traverse. The soldiers seized their weapons and prepared for any emergency. A figure in rubber boots and trench coat appeared. This was Lieutenant Sutherland, commander of the platoon, and son of the colonel of the regiment.

"How's things, Corporal?" he inquired.

"Very good, sir," answered the corporal, "except the chow ain't any too great in quantity."

"Well, we'll have to expect that for a while. Fritz is paying more attention to the back areas now, especially the roads, and it's hard to get rations up from the dumps."

Here his eye spied the Otter.

"Hello, Peter," said the officer pleasantly. "How are you? How many Huns have you potted this morning?"

"I couldn't be worse if I try, sir," replied the Otter. "I haven't cotch any Hons yet, but I have two-t'ree-six tonight, you bet."

"Go to it," laughed the officer. "By the way," he continued, "McBride, you're detailed from this platoon to go on patrol tonight. I'm going to take the patrol and a man from the divisional intelligence section is going with us. We'll assemble right after stand-to, in the town by my quarters."

Then he went on to inspect the next post.

THE Otter went to one of the sleeping shelves in the front wall and drew out a rifle carefully protected from the wet by a canvas cover. This cover he removed and disclosed a regulation Springfield, with a telescopic sight. He inspected the barrel, worked the bolt a few times, and squinted through the telescope. Then he carefully loaded the magazine, and climbed out of the rear wall of the trench.

There was a little knoll in rear, well protected from even the observatories on Mont Sec, that he intended to occupy. He had two missions in view, the potting of an enemy officer and the location and destruction of a Boche sniper, who had been particularly active during the past few days.

All during the day the Otter lay patiently behind his knoll, but saw nothing to shoot at. There were one or two working parties out, but these, by a sort of gentlemen's agreement, were left alone by both sides.

Just before sunset the Otter dragged his stiffened limbs down into the trench, put his sniping rifle away, took up another, and prepared to stand-to with the garrison.

At the same time, back in the regimental P.C., Colonel James Sutherland was giving his orders to Lieutenant James Sutherland, Jr.

"I want, first of all," said the colonel, "to find out how vigilant the enemy outposts are. Remember, though, that you are patroling and not raiding. Next, I have been informed that the wire and other junk is being removed from that old communication trench west of Richecourt.

"Find out if that's so. If it is, we must prepare a little surprize for any raiding party that comes into our lines by that route. Return by the west end of our sector and see if it's true that machine-gun crews are coming out between the lines after dark. Is that all clear?"

"Yes, sir," answered the lieutenant.

"Well, good luck," said the colonel, extending his hand.

Father and son shook hands. Then the colonel dropped the hard official tone in which he had given his instructions.

"Take care of yourself, kid," he said.

The lieutenant saluted and withdrew.

Lieutenant Sutherland and the man from the intelligence section went back to the front line through the gathering dusk. They ducked across the bridge by the wash-house and went up through the back yards of the town until they reached the principal street.

Then they turned into a building that bore the chiseled words over the door, "*Pompe De Pompier.*" It was the old fire station. This was the platoon P.C. and adjoined the city hall, from the cellar of which a communication trench led out through the graveyard to the fire trench, and so on into No Man's Land.

There were seven men waiting for them, some of them filling ammunition pouches with pistol ammunition, others blackening their faces with a piece of burnt cork and one was giving out grenades, two to each.

"How does this happen?" demanded the lieutenant. "I thought only six men were to go. Who's the extra man?"

The Otter rose from the shadows.

"Me," he said simply.

"Come over here," ordered the lieutenant, and led the Otter to one side. "You can't go on this patrol," he continued, when they were out of earshot of the rest. "The colonel has had you on other duty all day. Besides, I haven't any authority to take you. What did you want to go for? There'll be lots more."

"Jimmie," said the Otter, "you jus' one small boy. I mak you wooden gun one time an' you ron off to shoot moose and scare me and you fadder to deat'. Jimmie, you better not go out dere by you'self. You ain't use to go roun' in night-times. Jimmie, dose macheen-gon she's bad fellar. So Pete better go, too."

The lieutenant grinned in the darkness. He had had some idea of the plea that the Otter would make and the language he would use, and it was for this purpose that he had withdrawn into a corner. The Otter, while he was a splendid soldier, never could realize that Lieutenant Sutherland was anything more than little Jimmie of the old camping days.

"Pete," said the lieutenant, "I can't take you. My father would skin me alive if I did. I can't do it, Pete. But the next time you'll go with me, I promise you that. The colonel wants you to snipe some more tomorrow and your eye will be on the bum if you stay up all night."

"——, my eye," replied the Otter. "When you get so old as me, you doan need sleep. Man dat follow caribou t'ree day and den bring her home to camp on hees back ain't goin' get tired when he just lie on belly all day and crawl two-t'ree mile dat night. Jimmie, you tak ol' Pete, too. You jus' a good lil boy, Jimmie."

"Can't do it, Pete," said the officer. "It can't be done. We're in the Army now, where we can't do as we want to. But the next time I surely will take you."

The Otter threw out his hands in an attitude of resignation and went silently out of the house.

"Who's that soldier?" asked the intelligence man.

"He's an old friend of the family," answered the lieutenant. "I allow him a lot of liberty. He's known me since I was a toddler. He wanted to go with us the worst way, but I couldn't let him."

The lieutenant looked rather anxiously at the other man when he was through speaking, for one never knew about these people from the intelligence section. The man wore no insignia, but he might be an officer for all that, for officers did not wear any distinguishing mark at the first line. He probably was an officer and from the size of his girth, a major at least.

It might not look well for Jimmie's efficiency record if this man reported that he was too unmilitary in his dealings with the enlisted personnel.

"To —— with what he reports," thought Lieutenant Sutherland. "I wouldn't be military with Pete for all the old regulars in France."

The intelligence man made no further comment, however, and Lieutenant Jimmie proceeded to give his final instructions to the patrol.

"We're going out in fan-shaped formation," said the lieutenant. "The sergeant will be on my right and the intelligence man on my left. The rest of you will spread out, each holding the other's belt, the way wild geese fly. You've all been out before, so I don't need to go into this in detail. We'll advance one by one, and I don't want two men moving at the same time. Understand?

"Also, there's to be absolutely no firing and no grenades thrown without command. In case of dispersal of the patrol, every one goes for himself. If you want to get home, keep the points of the compass in your minds. First we're going north, then west, then south, and if you pay any attention at all, you can easily tell when we change direction. Any questions?"

There were none.

The patrol, with faces and hands blackened, and armed with pistols, grenades and knives, was an awesome sight. They were a little jumpy, right at this moment, at the prospect of going out into the shadows between the lines, but that would disappear the moment they crossed the last trench.

They made a final adjustment of equipment, gave their hands another dab with the burnt cork, and jostled each other down the stairs to the communication trench.

The night was bitter cold, but there was no wind and the stars in their glittering brightness seemed very near the earth.

"I think we're in for a storm," said the lieutenant. "Those stars are too bright. It hasn't rained for twenty-four hours, either."

Then the patrol moved on in silence until they came to the fire trench, climbed over the parapet and crept softly down into the waste beyond the wire.

MEANWHILE the Otter roamed up and down the fire trench like a dog whose master has gone off and left him. He trod upon feet and stumbled against sleeping men who cursed him bitterly. Non-commissioned officers dragged him off the parapet with many words.

At last he came opposite the knoll from which he had done his sniping during the day. He crawled over the back of the trench and took up a position on the knoll, squatting there on his heels and looking out over the rolling plain. He remained there throughout the night, holding his breath every time a light went up from the German lines.

The night suddenly became colder and the Otter could smell the approach of dawn.

"Now I will go down," he thought. "They will be in before the day."

He stood up and buttoned his overcoat, so that it would not hinder his walking.

From the land of dead things came the crash of a grenade. A shower of lights flew up from the German trenches and more grenades exploded. A machine gun chattered—two, three, half a dozen swelled the rising chorus.

In the trench below, the Otter heard the stir and murmur of the garrison standing to arms and lining the parapet. A sudden hush and the faint popping of pistol fire, then the machine guns roared again. Flares went up from the American lines, but showed nothing except the stretches of wire and the crazily leaning posts on which it was strung.

There was no attack, but the German guns continued to sweep the waste between the lines until the first half light of the Winter dawn, when they suddenly ceased and a fearful quiet settled down upon the sector.

The Otter went down into a trench filled with silent, tight-lipped men. The patrol had not yet returned. Reluctantly the garrison went back to their holes in the ruins of the town, to go to bed and meditate upon the fate of their comrades beyond the wire. The Otter was due in the eastern end of the regimental sector that day, but he stopped to talk a moment to his comrades of the previous day.

"D'you think they all got bumped?" asked the corporal, "or do you think they are layin' up out there, waitin' for night to come in?"

"Can't say," answered the Otter. "Mebbe dey separate. You can' tell what she's do in night-time, when dose grenade go *pow!* and dose macheen gon say *pup-pup-pup-pup!* All prisoner, mebbe. Mebbe one-t'ree wounded fellar, and dey wait for dark to breeng him on trench."

"You'd think one of 'em could get away," spoke up the man who carried the automatic rifle. "It don't seem possible that they'd all get killed or captured. That wasn't much of a scrap. It was mostly Jerry machine guns chuckin' lead around."

"I'll say," said another, "they chucked enough around so that a cootie couldn't live out there. I'm bettin' yuh they all got killed."

"Gee," said the corporal, "it'll break the Old Man's heart if the colonel's son got bumped off while he was with this company."

Another man, one of the riflemen, who had been an orderly at the regimental P.C, until a raging thirst had made him poach on the adjutant's private bottle of cognac, stood up from the ration box on which he was sitting and gave evidence of being about to propound some wondrous truth, but was having difficulty in shaping the words.

"Spit it out!" said the corporal. "You got a plan to win the war? How come all the enthusiastic look?"

"We'll —— soon know if they got in," cried the ex-orderly, "because the balloon will report any bodies out there, or any men it can see."

The Otter nodded his head in agreement. It was from balloon reports that most of his targets were picked.

"Yeh," said the corporal, "but what good will that do us? We don't get no reports up here."

"The captain will tell us," suggested one of the men, and with this ray of hope the men of the post prepared for their day's tour and the Otter went off to one of the houses near Seichprey, from the upper stories of which a German observation post could be seen.

In the regimental post of command, the colonel was looking into the cold fireplace. He shivered a little and drew his trench coat more closely about him, for the sky was clouding and the air was damp and biting.

On the kitchen table that was used as a desk was the effective strength report of that day. Two of the companies reported two men missing in action, and L company two men and an officer. Lieutenant Sutherland had belonged to L company.

The colonel resumed a conversation with the adjutant.

"It may not mean anything," said the adjutant, who occupied a smaller table at the other end of the room. "They may have been delayed getting back and have laid up in a shell hole until night."

"The intelligence section reports considerable firing," replied the colonel, "right about where that patrol would have been. Where's the air service report? I haven't seen it this morning."

"I suppose it has been delayed," said the adjutant. "I can't imagine where it can be."

This was a lie. The report was at that moment in the adjutant's pocket. It stated that a plane returning from the dawn patrol had swooped to fire upon an enemy machine gun crew and that the aviator had seen either a wounded man or a new corpse a little west of the north end of the village of Richecourt.

The telephone jangled.

"This is Hinky Dinks," a voice at the other end of the wire told the adjutant. "One of your wandering Jews is coming over in a truck. He's full of French liquor."

"How long has he been gone?" asked the adjutant with a pounding heart.

"Not long," was the reply, and then the click of the circuit being closed.

Now conversations by telephone were very cryptic, due to the fact that Fritz had instruments by which he could hear what was said on American wires. The Americans could also hear Fritz. The adjutant then leaped to the conclusion that Hinky Dinks, the code name of the second battalion company post, was trying to tell him that one of the members of the patrol had come into the French lines and was being sent to regimental headquarters for questioning.

The colonel went on with his day's work and the adjutant with his. There were reports from subordinates to be signed, and reports from superiors to be read. The French liaison officer came in and he and the colonel had a long conference over the maps tacked on the walls.

A stranger would never have known that the colonel's son was somewhere out in the stretch of wood and meadow that the map represented, and that no one knew whether he were alive or dead.

The gas officer came in and reported and the transportation officer reported. Then a colonel of French infantry paid a call and outlined a long and complicated plan for a joint operation of his and the American regiment. This, of course, had to be repeated through an interpreter.

"Now then, my colonel," concluded the interpreter, "what do you think of that plan? Is it not a splendid one?"

The colonel turned absent-mindedly to the adjutant.

"Say, Captain" he said, "where the —— do you suppose that man is that was coming over here from Hinky Dinks?"

While the interpreter still held his expression of scandalized horror, McBride and a lieutenant from the battalion entered the room.

THERE was an electric silence. McBride was very white and his uniform was torn and caked with mud. He stepped forward and saluted the colonel.

"Were you on this patrol?" asked the colonel.

"Yessir."

"Tell me about it. Give him a chair, some one."

The adjutant brought a chair for McBride and he sat down and began.

"Well, sir, we started out, Lieutenant Sutherland in command, and first we went over toward Reechcoor. It was pretty cold and the ground was frozen a bit. Our clothes scraped an' we couldn't help it. The lieutenant was ahead and then the sergeant on one side and the intelligence man on the other.

"Well, we crawled around in the dark an' we come to a trench, and then we waited till the intelligence guy and the lieutenant got in the trench. It was an old one and they said some one had been takin' the wire out of it. Then we went on some more and started along between the two trenches. He was pretty close to the German wire this time, but nothin' happened.

"Then we come back an' I think the lieutenant got lost for a while, because he and the intelligence guy had a long chew. I don't know what they said, they just whispered. Then we started back the way we came. I guess they was huntin' for that little town out there in No Man's Land, Reechcoor, or somethin' like that, so they could get their bearings again.

"Well, after a while a flare went up an' we seen the town, so we knew we was all right again. Then a machine-gun crew started shootin' at us, an' we all ducked in a shell hole. We was there quite a while. The gun stopped after a while and the lieutenant says, 'I'm goin' to reconnoiter.' He borrowed a couple of bombs and crawled out.

"Pretty quick we heard a bomb go and about a million lights went up. I guess all the machine guns in the German army started to shoot. I guess they seen us after a while and some Jerries come out after us, because all of a sudden the intelligence guy reaches out quick and grabs a stick-bomb that had rolled in the hole an' throws it out.

"The machine guns stops too, and some one says the Dutch was going to rush us and to stand by with bombs. The intelligence guy says, 'Every man for hisself.' It wasn't no use to stay there and get taken prisoner, so we all crawled out and beat it before the guns started firing again. I got over on the left of our sector an' come into the Frog trench."

"And you don't know what happened to any of the others?" asked the colonel.

"Nosir."

"Do you think they were captured?"

"Nosir. They would have put up a scrap, and I didn't hear no firing except machine gun after I left the hole."

"Well, that'll be enough for today. Go off somewhere and go to sleep. Maybe some of them will be in by the time you wake up."

McBride withdrew and then the colonel of French artillery took his departure likewise. The colonel turned back to his desk and began to read over a circular memo on an improved method of wholesale delousing. He had read that memo before that morning, but it had made no impression on his mind and would not if he read it fifty times. He was wondering what had happened to his son.

The telephone buzzed again.

"This is Highland Park," said a voice. "Our forward O. P. reports a body northwest of Richecourt, about half way between the German wire and the northwest corner of the town. Maybe it's one of your men."

Highland Park was an artillery battalion P. C. and their observation post had been notified to keep an eye out for survivors of the patrol who might still be between the lines. The adjutant thanked his informant and made a note of the information.

The garrison of the trench before the ruined town found several things of interest when they prepared for their nightly toil. First, a cold rain was falling. It could hardly be called a rain, for it was little more than fog that had just enough impetus to soak and soak through the toughest slicker and the thickest overcoat, right down to one's very hide.

Second, the rumor was about that McBride had fought his way back through two German regiments and that all the rest of the patrol were dead and their bodies in a heap in front of the German wire.

The greatest event, though, was when the garrison were preparing for stand-to, setting up machine guns and preparing grenades while there remained enough light for them to see. There was a sharp challenge from some sentry, a joyful shout, and the survivors of the patrol leaped down from the parapet, bringing with them the man from the intelligence section, who had been shot through the jaw and was very weak from loss of blood.

Discipline was momentarily suspended while the garrison clustered about their comrades. They all talked at once.

"Where yuh been?"

"What happened?"

"Did yuh kill any Boche?"

"Got any prisoners?"

"Shut up, for ——'s sake," cried the sergeant of the patrol, "and get us a stretcher. Don't bother me! There didn't nothin' happen. This guy got hit and we hung out in a shell hole all day, because we were down in that little valley and didn't dare cross the skyline to come in."

"Why didn't the artillery see yuh? They been lookin' for some one all day."

"How the —— could they see us? We was on the other side of the hill! They can't see through a hill can they? Give us a cigaret and lemme get the —— out of here. I crave sleep."

At this moment the company commander appeared.

"Get to your stations, men," he said curtly.

The men began to move off. Then the captain turned to the sergeant.

"Do you know what became of Lieutenant Sutherland, Sergeant?" he asked.

A sudden hush fell. The men who were moving off down the trench stopped and waited to hear the sergeant's reply. In the deep quiet it was clearly audible and echoed down the silent trench as if he had shouted it.

"I don't know," he said. "We was held up by a machine gun and he went off to reconnoiter. We never seen him after that."

There was a long pause and then began the splashing of feet going down the trench and the *swish-swish* of wet slickers as the men moved off to their stations. There was a series of rattling clicks as some one shoved a magazine into an automatic rifle. Then came the gunner's voice from the darkness.

"You an' me, shosho gun, got a debt we're gonna pay Fritz tonight."

The captain sent a runner to the battalion with the news that the patrol had returned. The battalion reported it to the regiment by telephone and the last doubt that the body in No Man's Land was Lieutenant Sutherland's vanished.

How do such things leak out? How does the buck private in the front line know the most confidential order almost as soon as the colonel? As if it had been proclaimed in general orders, the fact that Lieutenant Sutherland was dead and that his body was still out in front of Richecourt was known throughout the regiment within the hour.

In the lieutenant's own company the news was received with a certain grimness. A corporal, making the rounds of his squad, would whisper:

"Say! they found the lieutenant's body. It's out in front of Richecourt."

"No!" would come the reply, "is that so, no kiddin'?"

"Sure it's so. I got it straight from so-and-so. He's a runner and he heard the Old Man talkin' about it."

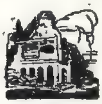
"All right, Fritz! We'll pay yuh back for that. You wait and see!"

There was an undefined longing in most of their hearts. They felt that something should be done.

"Where's the Chief?" some one asked. "What's he think about it?"

The Chief was off somewhere over toward Seichprey, and beyond reach.

Then McBride appeared in the trench, a bulky shadow, rubbing his eyes and cursing because he had not been awakened for supper. Several of the men descended upon him and there was a hurried conference. McBride could be heard vigorously objecting, but gradually his voice grew quieter and finally the group dispersed again.



THE night grew colder with a thick fog. The dripping wetness poured down upon the trenches like black smoke from an inverted stack. Something was afoot in L company's section of trench. Usually the men would gather, two, sometimes three, together, a blanket around their shoulders, and huddling close together for warmth, would pass the night as comfortably as they might.

But tonight there was continual movement, splashing of water, the *suck-suck* of hurrying hobnails ankle deep in the glue-like mud, subdued voices, and a great deal of clambering upon the parapet.

The enemy was nervous himself. Early in the night he began to sweep with machine gun fire and keep three or four lights in the air at all times. The lights, of course, were not much good against the fog, but they would show any prowlers between the lines that Fritz was awake and vigilant.

The guns sounded somewhat like a pack of dogs in a distant wood, driven wild by a diversity of scents. A continuous yapping and barking, with no apparent object. Once, in the night, and twice again in the early hours of morning, the chorus settled to a deep baying, as if the distant pack had glimpsed some quarry.

The men of M company were profoundly dismayed at this, for they had a patrol out, but there was no reason why L company should have held its breath or cursed the Germans so terribly. The entire company strained their eyes into the blackness throughout the night and when they had stood-to at dawn, went off to their sleeping quarters in grim silence, their teeth set and their eyes straight before them.

M company's patrol had not returned, but L company did not know it and that made their agitation all the more remarkable.

In the regimental P. C., later in the morning, Colonel Sutherland was speaking his mind. He stamped up and down and chewed madly upon a cigar.

"Now listen," he told the adjutant. "I want you to call up the company officers of L company and I want you to put every —— one of them under arrest. You tell them for me that I consider last night's performance a piece of —— poor discipline and worthy of a mob of Algerians.

"Twenty-seven casualties, by ——! And when I ask the reason, they tell me the men went out between the lines without authority. Twenty-seven men in one night and M company loses another patrol! How is that going to look to the brigade commander?

"Why, the thing is preposterous! If they want to get shot, I'll fix it for them! Direct disobedience of orders, that's what it amounts to! Desertion! Mutiny! Twenty-seven men going out into No Man's Land! What the blue flaming —— did they go out there for? Do you know?"

"Yes, sir," said the adjutant. "I know."

The colonel's jaw dropped.

"You know, ——! Am I losing my mind? You know! What did they go out there for?"

"I think," said the adjutant quietly, "that they went out there after Lieutenant Sutherland's body."

The colonel sat down and turned his back upon the adjutant. The room was quiet for a long time. Then the colonel spoke in a much softer tone.

"You can rescind that order about putting the officers in arrest and substitute this one: 'The commanding officer of this regiment—no, change that. Have it begin:

" 'It has been brought to the attention of the commanding officer that a large number of unnecessary casualties have been incurred, due to unauthorized excursions between the lines. This practise must cease.' "

There was a long silence after that, then the colonel continued:

" 'There will be no further attempts to recover the body of Lieutenant Sutherland. James L. Sutherland, colonel commanding.'

"Write that out," said the colonel gruffly, "and I'll sign it when I come back. I'm going for a walk."

The adjutant had just placed the finished order on the colonel's desk and was weighting it with a pistol clip, when the Otter entered the room without knocking. He unslung his pack and leaned his rifle in its waterproof case against the wall. Then he took off his hat and wrung the water from his face.

"Colonel Sudderlan' not in?" he inquired.

"No, he's not in. Is there anything I can do for you?" asked the adjutant, grinning. He knew the Otter.

"What dis I hear about Jimmie?"

The adjutant nodded silently.

"An' dey ain't got him yet?"

"Not yet. A lot of men went out last night, but it seems they've got machine guns trained on him and we lost twenty-seven men, killed, wounded and missing. We were able to get all the bodies but the lieutenant's. Those —— are leaving it there as a decoy, knowing that we'll make every effort to bring it in. It's enough to make a man grab a rifle and go up there himself!"

"Where is he?" asked the Otter.

The adjutant showed him on the big map tacked to the wall. The Otter carefully noted the landmarks, the distance from the old communication trench, the distance from Richecourt, where the German wire was, and the bearing of Mount Sec.

Mount Sec was a hill that stuck up from the plain like a boil on a man's neck. The Germans could see for miles from its top.

The Allies could see it, too, and at night could locate themselves by it when on patrol. The Otter studied the map a long time.

"I get him," he said finally.

"But there's an order out against it," objected the adjutant.

"De man what keep me from go out on dat place tonight, his granfadder ain't born yet," answered the Otter.

"All right," grinned the adjutant. "You've got a sniper's pass, you can go anywhere, and I certainly won't stand in your way."

Some one knocked.

"Come in," called the adjutant, and two men entered, bearing a bedding roll and a wooden box.

In the box were some letters, a razor, brush, and towel, a *musette* bag, an overseas cap, a pipe and tobacco, a canteen and a Sam Brown belt. These were the effects of Lieutenant Sutherland, deceased.

"Just put them down anywhere," said the adjutant quietly. "That's all, men. You may go."

"There's this, too," said one of the men and he took out a silver identification bracelet from his pocket and put it on the table. It was a little silver oval, with a chain to go around the wrist, and on it was written—

Lieutenant James L. Sutherland, Junior
U. S. A.

These were not regulation in the American army, but they were worn just the same. They jangled, though, and that was probably the reason the lieutenant had left his behind when he went on patrol.

"Well, I guess I'll go," said the Otter, when the men had departed. "I got to hurry. But I bring him back, sure. You tell colonel."

"All right," said the adjutant. "Take care of yourself."

When the Otter had gone the adjutant looked for the identification bracelet, but could not find it.

"Now that's funny," he thought. "Where the —— did that man put that? I thought it was here a moment ago."

But the bracelet had disappeared.

THE OTTER went directly to the place where he was billeted. He filled a pipe and smoked it slowly, while he decided how the thing was to be done. The Otter, as a soldier frequently does, when his own particular buddy is killed, had gone back to fundamental impulses.

If a white man, who has had the influence of civilization for a thousand years or more, can forget it all in half an hour, how much more easily can a red man become a savage when he has known civilization for but three generations, and then only partially?

The Otter believed that as long as Lieutenant Sutherland's body remained unburied, the soul of the lieutenant must wander about the earth, unable to enter heaven. The Otter intended to bring in the officer's body, but if it had been removed, then he had another thing that could be done.

When the Otter's people fought with the Mohawk, the Malaseet or the Etchemin, it frequently happened that the body of a dead warrior could not be recovered. In such a case there was a certain procedure to follow, which, if properly done, would allow the soul to leave the earth and enter heaven.

This the Otter intended to make use of if necessary, and it was for this purpose that he had brought along the identification bracelet.

The Otter cleaned and oiled his pistol; then, on second thought, decided not to take it. Instead, he took out of his pack his own particular trench knife, made of a bayonet broken half way down the blade, and ground to a razor edge. This would be his only weapon. He decided to go out as far as the German wire and then turn and go toward the body from the rear.

If there were machine guns guarding it, their crews would have no suspicion of any one coming at them from their own trenches, and these crews must first be disposed of before the body could be removed.

The Otter yearned for the things that prepare the savage heart for battle—a dance, exhortation, fasting, religious ceremonies. However, they must be foregone. At least, though, the Otter could prepare himself as the warriors used to.

He had only a very general idea of how this was done, but he would do the best he could. It would be necessary for him to have grease—butter would do—and when he went to mess, he stole a five-pound can from the cook, who laid the theft to a despatch rider and barred said despatch rider from the kitchen for many a day.

It was one o'clock when mess was finished. There remained then about four hours before dark, in which time the Otter must make what few preparations were necessary. Firstly, he bethought himself of a camouflage section near-by, that painted scenic effects on canvas.

These paintings represented blue sky, and shattered beams and house ruins, and were hung in front of real ruins, to conceal whatever was therein, such as a field piece, an observation post, or something of the kind. The section was under French control, but there were a number of Americans attached to it for instruction, and the Otter sought out one of these.

"Have you got little bit paint you can give me?" inquired the Otter.

"What kind o' paint you want?" asked the camouflager.

"Red, blue, yellow."

"What do you want it for?"

"I'm sniper. I want to fix my halmet so de Boche can' see her so plain. Dat black halmet, you know, she's show up lak house on fire."

"Come in," and the camouflage man led the way into a barn. There he allowed the Otter to fill three tiny tin cans, empty *conserve* tins, with red, yellow and sky-blue paint. These the Otter put gingerly in a larger can, and went out.

Then he took the road up toward the front lines and followed it until the ditch alongside changed to a communication trench, then he dropped into the trench and continued his journey up to the ruined town.

The garrison of the trench were just waking up and were clustered about the cellar entrances, waiting for their supper. Some were oiling their rifles and here and there the Otter would see a muffled figure, hung with canteens, plodding through the rain to the kitchen for supper for his squad.

The roads were inches deep in mud and the shell holes that pitted the streets were rapidly becoming deep wells. The Otter went to the ruined fire-house, where he found the new platoon commander, to whom he reported.

"I am horder to report," said the Otter. "I am to snipe tomorrow."

"Good enough," said the officer. "I guess you can sling your blankets down cellar with the runners. You can mess with them, too."

"T'ank you, sir," said the Otter, and went down-stairs.

Here he left his blankets and rifle, then he went out through the communication trench to the front line.

The fire trench was deserted. There was a sentry post in the next traverse, but they were all in the shelves along the wall, muffled in overcoat and slicker. The lone man on the parapet had no eyes for anywhere except to the front.

Here the Otter paused, took off his helmet and drew a trench mirror from the pocket of his blouse. Then he stripped to the waist and covered himself with the butter he had stolen from the cook. It was good, heavy oleomargarin and would not wash off for some time. This treatment took away some of the wind's bite and in addition would make him hard to hold, in case he came to grips with the enemy.

The next move was to set up the trench mirror on a shelf of dirt and apply the paint that he had got from the camouflage man in alternate streaks of red, yellow and blue, to his cheeks. Then he produced his razor and after lathering his head well, shaved the right side of it entirely clean.

It was rather a botchy job, but as good a one as could be expected, considering that the rain drove continually against the mirror and the Otter shivered terribly in the wind. The light was none of the best, but it lasted until he had finished, when it failed entirely and darkness fell. Then the Otter slung his knife about his neck and tightened his belt.

He felt the need of jewelry, silver arm bands and earrings, and a necklace or two. He bethought him of the silver tag that had been among the lieutenant's effects. This he took from his pocket and put on his wrist. It jingled very prettily, but too loudly, and the Otter took it off and put it in the watch pocket of his breeches.

A FLARE shot up from the German trenches and when its light had died, the Otter mounted the parapet and bounded down the other side. After he had passed through the wire, he lay and listened for a while, but could hear nothing. The wind whined among the strands of wire and the tin cans rattled continually.

There was a smell of dampness and rotting wood, and the musty odor of old houses long shut up. The mud in which the Otter lay was cold and oozed up through his fingers. His hands felt as if he had placed them in a mass of cold glue.

The Otter was in the gulley that ran diagonally in front of the American trenches. He had no fear of being seen from the German lines and he knew that the American garrison would not bother him as long as they were not startled by some other event.

They would be lining the parapet now, for stand-to, but they would not shoot up any flares and by the time the machine guns started sweeping, he would be over the ridge and in the next valley. He could even walk, here, in a crouching position.

Once in the second valley, it was a different matter. From here he was within sight of the enemy lines, though in that thick blackness and smoking storm he had no fear of being seen. The men that were shooting the flares from the enemy lines were probably standing at the entrance to their dugouts, sticking their arms into the air and shooting the flares, then diving in out of the rain until it was time to fire another light. Nevertheless, when one went up, the Otter flattened himself and at times he feared he would be seen because of the showers of mud that leaped as he hurled himself to earth.

Once, after a flare had burned itself out, just as he started to move on, a soft scraping sound caught his ear; just the same sound a piece of sandpaper would make if drawn across wood. The Otter stopped. The only thing that would make just that sound would be a body being dragged over some mud. He listened again and this time made his decision.

There was a patrol out, and moreover it was coming his way. The Otter had no desire to meet any patrol, German or American. Either would mean the failure of his mission. He turned at right angles and slid rapidly down the slope that he had just climbed.

Suddenly he dug his toes into the mud to stop his downward course. Directly in front of him he could hear breathing. If the members of the patrol were spread around as they seemed to be, the Otter need not be so careful to make his own movements noiseless.

How would the patrol know it was not one of its own members crawling around? On the other hand, they might challenge him out of suspicion, ask him for some password or something.

Away from here, and that quickly!

He turned again at right angles to the slope and started slipping away like some huge snake. All was silent now, ominously so. The Otter listened once more. Just to his left, instead of the patter of the rain on the mud, the falling drops gave a dull popping sound. They were falling on wet cloth and there were men that way, too.

"My luck is poor and my medicine is not strong," thought the Otter and he drew his knife.

He started forward again, this time with the idea of finding where this patrol was and either passing through it or dying in the attempt. A shell hole barred his path and as he turned to creep along its edge the earth gave way and let him into the water with which the hole was filled.

The splash sounded like a thunder clap, but the Otter lay there silently. Perhaps he would not be found in that pit-darkness and if he were, he had his knife that did its work silently without the bellowing advertisement of a revolver. That splash had been over-loud though, and the entire patrol might investigate it.

A hand was placed on the Otter's chest and a knee in his face forced his head under water. He went down without struggling, his muscles loose, but the pressure was almost immediately released. The Otter came up into the glittering whiteness of a flare. Not four inches from him was a man, half in and half out of the shell hole, lying on his face.

The Otter could just see a little of his back and his hips, but enough to tell to what army he belonged. The man was French. He and the Otter had fallen into the shell hole at the same time, which would account for the loud splash, and the other man, in scrambling to get out, had crawled across the Otter, either without noticing him at all, or else thinking that he was a corpse. When the light went out, the man crawled out of the shell hole and the patrol went on.

The Otter crawled out of the water himself and out of the shell hole on the other side. He began to feel the ground ahead of him with his hands, trying to find which way it sloped, so that he could climb the rise of it.

Either it was too slight to feel, or else his hands were so chilled with the icy mud that they had no sensation left, for he could not tell but what the ground he was on was perfectly level. He tried lying down and rolling, but he rolled as easily one way as the other.

At risk of stopping a bullet, he stood erect. There were no landmarks that he could see, nothing to tell him where he was, nothing to see but the crow-black night and nothing to hear but the steady swishing of the rain.

He lay down again and started to crawl at random, doing his very best to keep from circling and knowing that sooner or later he must find some clue to his position.

The lights would give him an idea of where the German lines were, but he had a definite objective, a certain place that he must get to, and he could not hunt all up and down the lines for it. His heart turned to water within him, for the night was advancing and the time was growing short in which he must do that which he had to do.

There was a taste of oil and of turpentine upon his tongue, so he knew that his paint was washing off. The Otter cursed softly in English.

"Bad luck, he's my mudder-in-law," he said.

Another light soared, but the Otter was as still as a rock before it burst. He had heard the click of the pistol that fired it and the rustle of the man that had held the pistol getting back under his tent-half again.

The Germans had no slickers, but they had a tent cloth not as large as the American shelter-half and they used to cover themselves with it to keep off the rain.

The Otter kept his eyes off the ground, for he wanted to see if he could find his bearings. He was in luck this time, for off to his right, and a little below him, the dazzling whiteness of the flare showed the ruins of Richecourt, like a row of broken teeth, just visible above the ground.

This was the place, then, that he had come to find. That man that fired the flare was probably a member of the machine crew that had killed Lieutenant Sutherland and that had butchered the men that had come after his body.

The body must be very near here and if it were protected with alarm wires, it was a wonder that the Otter had not blundered into one of them. He knew now where one of the guns was. First let him see to that one and then locate the body.

HE CRAWLED back the way he had come, turned north toward the enemy lines and, after he had crept quite near them, turned again and came down upon the gun from the rear.

No flares went up behind him; they were all in front now, for the Germans in the trench knew that there was a gun in front of their wire and that they themselves need not keep watch, especially on a wild night like this. Their officers would not have agreed with this view, but a wet night keeps officers indoors, as well as men.

The Otter's approach became much slower and more careful. It would never do to make a mistake now. There might be another gun echeloned behind the first one. It would seem that there was not, for the gun the Otter was after began to fire suddenly, almost under the Otter's nose.

The man that was firing the gun took his finger from the trigger. The gun was one of the light type and rested almost level with the ground. As the gunner ceased firing, he heard a peculiar sound—a cocktail of a sound, made up of the combined sounds of a slap, a rip, and a thud, all simultaneous.

He turned his head and the next thing he saw was either the pearly gates, or the entrance to that other destination of souls released from earthly bondage.

When the Otter had jerked his knife from the second man's body he crouched low, straining every sense to locate the other members of the gun crew. There were none. Perhaps they had gone back into the trench for ammunition, for water, or perhaps had heard or seen the French patrol pass and had gone to telephone the news along the line.

Perhaps there had been only two men

with the gun in the first place. Be that as it may, they were both dead now and the Otter waited patiently for a flare to show him the body of Lieutenant Sutherland.

It took two lights for him to discover it. It lay just below him, about fifteen yards away. There was an alarm wire that ran around the body evidently, or was stretched in front of it, that ended at the machine gun, where the wire was attached to two thin pieces of glass that would strike against each other if the wire were disturbed in the least. It was no wonder that no one had been able to reach the body.

The Otter feared that more wires might run to other guns, but that was a chance he must take. He would run little risk of tripping them if he went down to the body from the rear. When the third flare died, he was on his way to the body. By the time another light went up, he expected to be back in the gun position. He went rapidly now and took no thought of the cold, nor his fatigue, nor the roughness of the ground he was crossing.

In the dark he was upon the body before he realized it and he recoiled when his outstretched hand touched the lieutenant's blouse. He turned at once on his back and felt for the dead man's armpits. Ah! there they were! Then he began to drag the body toward him.

Without a sound, the body parted at the waist. The Otter, sick with superstitious horror, threw out his hand. What was that? Not blood, not flesh, but straw! The body was a dummy.

The Otter shuddered convulsively and the figure's helmet fell off against a stone. Clang! The Otter, his mind whirling, gave no heed until the sting of a bullet through his arm brought him to a realization of where he was. Then he flattened himself to earth.

A long time after, when the machine guns had ceased to sweep, the Otter, stiff with the cold, sat up and felt of the wound on his arm, from which the blood was still trickling slowly. Then he felt of another wound, a tiny hole in his breast that did not bleed. He choked back a cough and a little blood oozed from his lips. The Otter had been shot through the lungs.

A straw dummy, then, and not the lieutenant's body. A trap for Americans, baited with an officer's uniform. The Otter's fingers explored the blouse. He could feel the braid on the cuffs and the numbers of tiny holes where the bullets had gone through.

It was an officer's blouse, without the shadow of a doubt. Also there was not the shadow of a doubt that the man who had worn that blouse was dead, for the bullet holes in it were many, and those parts of it that had been protected from the rain, under the sleeves, and the side that had been toward the ground, were stiff with dried blood.

The lieutenant had been badly wounded, killed outright perhaps—the holes in the blouse showed that—carried into the German lines and his uniform torn from him. Then the uniform, filled with straw from the nearest bunk had been taken back again, surrounded with alarm wires and a machine gun planted to cover it. All this would have been barely the work of an hour. So had the trap been prepared.

The Otter tried to fight off the rising weakness that was upon him.

"The time is short," he thought, "before I shall be taken to the land of perpetual hunting. And this that I have promised to do is yet undone."

He idly felt of the blouse again.

Well, there was a way in which the soul of Lieutenant Sutherland might be released from earth and allowed to enter the lands of the blessed, even though his body had not received burial. The Otter wiped the blood from his lips and took heart. If the gods were kind enough to spare him a little time the thing could be done.

The rain was still falling in sheets and the wind drove it swirling and twisting across the plain. Even the big trench rats stayed in their holes; but then, they were well fed and could stand losing a night's food.

The water in the German trench was mid-leg deep, and the lonely sentinel thought sadly of the labor of the morrow, when the trench would have to be pumped out. That sentinel was very wet and the *unteroffizier* had just made his rounds. Why not duck into a dugout a moment? He would be safe for another half hour at least.

The sentry jumped off the fire step and went up the trench to where a species of blind alley led off. At the end of the alley a roof had been built from the back to the front wall of the trench and the end boarded up. Here a machine gun crew slept during the day.

Both the alley and the floor of the shelter were higher than the main trench, and were consequently dry. The sentry ducked in and closed the door.

There were eight bunks in there, four on a side, in double decks. In the corner was an open fireplace, connecting with a chimney made of bricks and mud. There was an old brazier on the hearth, in which the embers of a fire still glowed. It was warm and fairly dry and the sentry lay down on an empty bunk for a moment to rest his chilled bones.

THE Otter slid hastily down into the trench and prepared for instant combat. In one hand he held his knife, in the other Lieutenant Sutherland's silver identification bracelet. The Otter could hear nothing. He had intended going back to the machine gun that he had silenced, but he had not had the time to hunt for it and had landed in the fire trench instead.

He must find some one immediately, for it was only his iron will that was keeping him on his feet. He began to feel his way along the trench and in due time came to the machine gun shelter.

The sentry in the shelter had gone to sleep. The warmth and his drowziness combined had overcome him. He awoke with a start. Some one had come in and had left the door open. The sentry trembled. If it were an officer—but an officer would bellow a command. This other man was cautiously feeling along the bunks. The sentry felt for a flashlight he had.

The Otter heard the movement and whirled about. He was growing very weak and his ears no longer could hear tiny sounds and give him warning of the presence of others by their breathing. But the creaking of the bunk's wire as the sentry sat up was clearly audible.

A pencil of light leaped from the German's hand. It showed him a fearful face such as the most horrid goblin story of his childhood had never suggested. A face all streaked and daubed, above a naked torso plastered with mud and streaked where the paint from the face had dripped on it. A bloody mouth snarled at him.

The sentry's shriek of horror died in his throat as the Otter's knife socked home in him.

Then the Otter unbuttoned the sentry's blouse, opened the shirt, and summoning all his strength, slashed open the German's breast. Then he thrust the identification tag into the opening he had made. Lieutenant Sutherland was buried.

The German gun crew that lived in that shelter had knocked off early. They were wet and cold and they thought that the gun crew on their right, the one that the Otter had silenced, had ducked in, for they had heard no firing from there for some time. They were supposed to be in by stand-to anyway, and who would know when they had come in?

The part of the trench that the shelter was in was an offshoot of the main trench, a sort of finger that stuck out of the line. The parapet was not garrisoned at stand-to, for the main trench was just around the next traverse and this finger trench masked a part of it. In case of attack it would be covered from the main trench.

It was for this reason the machine gunners had built their shelter there, so that they might sleep undisturbed during the day.

The *unteroffizier* in the lead opened the door and stepped into the shelter, another man close behind him. The Otter's knife thudded into him and the other man leaped out, screaming, with a slashed arm.

Around a traverse the gun crew halted in consternation. This was terrible. They had come in early from their post and their shelter was full of raiders. Now if a scrap started they would be discovered and punished severely. Still, that was better than being killed.

One of them scampered back to the main trench for reinforcements and the others reconnoitered the shelter. Silence. Perhaps the raiders had fled. A pistol spat at them from the door. The Otter had the *unteroffizier's* Mauser in play.

Presently a number of men appeared on the run. In the darkness they rushed around the traverse into full sight of the shelter and orange flashes licked out the door at them like a snake's tongue.

They retreated, leaving three of their number in the trench. Then the place swarmed with Germans, for the garrison had come up to stand-to.

"*Amerikanen!*"

Rapidly the word passed about. There were raiders in the trench. The Germans tossed a grenade or two at the shelter and made another attempt at a rush. Their grenades fell short and did no harm, but the pistol spat at them again and they withdrew in disorder. An officer shoved his way through the crowd.

"*Kommt aus, du!*" he cried and would have said more, but his speech ended with the thud of his body falling against the fire step, and then with a rattling scrape, into the bottom of the trench.

The Otter began to chant his death song, for his pistol was empty. The Germans felt panic tug at their heart strings. Day was breaking and there would be explanations to make of how the raiders got in and why they had not been overwhelmed at once. And now this chanting! Perhaps it was one of their own number in there who had gone mad.

At last one of the men who lived in that shelter had a brilliant thought. He leaped up on the rear wall of the trench, at imminent risk of being shot at from the American lines, and ran along until he came to where the roof of the shelter crossed the trench.

He stopped at the chimney hole in the corner and held up the grenade he carried in his hand. With one sweep he jerked out the cord and tossed the grenade down the chimney. A long pause, while the Germans counted heartbeats.

Blung!"

The men in the trench advanced cautiously. When the smoke had ceased to pour from the door, they clustered about it and peered in. Half a dozen flashlights lighted up the darkness.

The pushing throng looked over shoulders and craned necks to see into the shelter. Horror! The mangled body of the sentry, the *unteroffizier* with his throat cut, and the half naked, mud-streaked, paint-bedaubed body of the Otter.

The Germans recoiled. They stood a while uneasily, looking at one another in the half light of dawn. Then by twos and threes they began to go down to the main trench, bending their heads and hunching their shoulders against the driving rain.

HOODLUMS OF THE FIRST CRUSADE

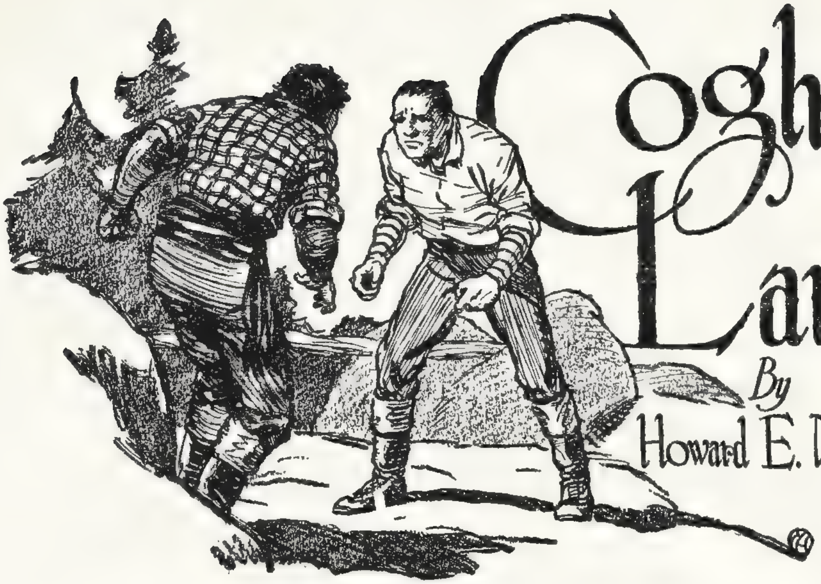
by F. R. Buckley

IN THE generality of wars and warlike expeditions, the authorities, military, commercial or spiritual, have always led, and the people have followed, more or less willingly. The First Crusade, which began with the preaching of Peter the Hermit in the eleventh century, was extraordinary in that it showed a reversal of this rule. Before the great nobles had even taken the Cross, thousands upon thousands of the French peasantry were already on their way down the Danube valley toward Jerusalem under the leadership of Peter the Hermit himself, and a knight whose name of Walter Has-Nothing sufficiently indicated his financial status. This vanguard, recruited by an enthusiasm as infectious as a physical epidemic, was so simple-minded as to imagine every hamlet it approached to be Jerusalem; and it lived upon the countryside, committing unspeakable outrages, in the sublime confidence that its holy mission dispensed all common laws.

Finally, a ragged, half-starved, fanatical horde, it arrived in the Greek Empire, at Constantinople, then the jeweled center of the civilized world. Too ignorant to be overawed by the gilded towers and domes or, as Michelet says, "by the multitudes of scribes and eunuchs," the pilgrims made themselves entirely at home. They stole the lead off the roofs of the churches, and compelled the astounded Greeks to buy it back again for cash; and, after sundry other outrages, loosed the pet lion of the Emperor Alexis from its cage, chased it through the streets of the capital and did it to death for sport.

This was too much.

The inhabitants arose at last, turned upon the crusaders, and massacred them in large numbers. The remainder, furnished with shipping by the annoyed but tactful emperor, were transported to Asia, in whose deserts, by all the probabilities, and for aught history says to the contrary, they all perished.



Coghan's Lamb

By
Howard E. Morgan

Author of "The Big Little Man," etc.

COGHAN, you big, red-headed, cock-eyed, double-crossin' Irishman, I'll git even with you fer this. S'help me, I'll bust you wide open. I'll—I'll—"

"Bat" Payne's final disposition of "Red" Coghan, if it ever got beyond the stage of mental conjecture, was lost in the mud-colored mist sweeping up from the flood-high river. Coghan was twenty miles away, so there was no danger of his big ears listening in. Oral advice was hardly necessary, however. He knew. He could have prophesied with considerable accuracy the state of Bat Payne's mind at that precise moment.

Payne, the pint-sized boss of Loring Camp, leaned against the log wall of his little cabin on the bank of the river, watching the arrival of the men whom Coghan, boss at Little Eddy, twenty miles up river, was loaning him for the balance of the season. What he saw constituted due cause for heaping calumny on the head of Red Coghan. There were about a dozen of them, all told, and not a sure enough lumberjack in the bunch. Payne knew. A single glance was enough.

One by one they splashed past him through the river shore mud and headed on through the drizzle toward the bunkhouse fifty yards away. Big men, all—hard-faced, dirty, truculent. Payne tugged at his drooping yellow mustache and swore earnestly. He had expected some tough customers, but not all, not so bad as these. The undesirables, the riffraff of Coghan's Camp—that was what they were.

No doubt most of them were crooks who had fled over the line from Canada. Trouble, trouble, trouble. Twenty years' experience enabled him to foresee all too clearly what would happen. His own men and these newcomers would mix like oil and water. There was "Coon" Meesick. Bully of the camp. Meesick was over there now in the bunkhouse along with twenty Loring Camp men, waiting. There would be an unending squabble. Probably a killing or two. And the net gain on the basis of additional work accomplished would be negligible. He needed men, too. Needed them badly.

But he should have known better than to have accepted Coghan's ready offer of assistance. It was a pretty mess, sure enough. Of course, the year previous he had worked the same stunt on Coghan. Had sent him several cripples. Payne grinned at the recollection. Coghan had taken it in good part. At least, there were no cripples here. But—

Payne's visual perspective was suddenly restricted by the appearance, directly before him, of a man whose looming bulk had materialized jinni-like from out the mist.

“You are— de boss?”

Payne grunted affirmatively.

The newcomer fumbled a soggy envelope into the little man’s hand.

It was a note from Coghan. Payne knew that before he opened it. Coghan was always writing letters. He pushed open the cabin door at his back and turned up the oil-lamp. The messenger followed him inside.

The boss of Loring Camp laboriously deciphered the penciled scrawl.

> DEAR BAT:
> This will interduce Louis Nikolai, one of the gentlest lamms in my folde. Him and your man Coon Meesick ought to make swell littel playmates. Suggest you bunk them together. Louis killed a dozen men or so up in Canada. He fites french. Better tip Coon off. Notice I ain’t sending you no crippels. You kin make your own. Hopeing you roast in ——.
> Yours, as ever, RED.

Payne muttered inaudible maledictions. Playmates! The big stiff! His quick eyes appraised Coghan’s “gentlest lamm.”

Louis Nikolai crouched above the pot-bellied stove in the center of the room. A damp, unfragrant odor, redolent of garlic and cheap liquor, accompanied the steam from his rain-soaked body. Light, dancing through a defective stove lid, illumined his dark face redly. During an unusually varied and active life Bat Payne had encountered many evil-appearing specimens of the *genus homo*. His own Coon Meesick was no he-doll, but this bird, Louis Nikolai, Coghan’s lamb, led them all by a head at least. What a face! What shoulders! And arms! And that neck! Hands like hams! He was tall in proportion, too. Built like a triangular column of granite. Playmates! He and Meesick. Suffering cats!

The little man’s concentrated attention finally penetrated Nikolai’s comfortable indifference. The big Frenchman reluctantly drew away from his impromptu Turkish bath and lurched across the creaking floor.

M’sieu Coghan say—he visit you—nex’ week.”

“Yeah?” The little river boss twisted his mustache savagely. Coming to gloat, eh? How he would laugh. The big yap. Always laughing, Coghan was.

“Yo’re Coghan’s ace man?”

“Oua, for sure.”

Payne thought rapidly. The bunkhouse was not big enough for these two. Coon Meesick was boss there. The inevitable must be put off as long as possible. He, Bat, didn’t fancy the Frenchman’s distinctive odor. Probably hadn’t had a bath since he last fell in the river, but—

“Wal now, that bein’ the case, Louis, you bunk here with me, same as Red would. Fer a few days, anyhow.”

Nikolai considered this extraordinary invitation ponderously. There was a catch in it somewhere. The sphinx-faced little river boss had something up his sleeve. And too, it was not good that his charges should be obliged to herd with those Loring Camp wolves, lacking his heavy handed guidance. But he couldn’t very well refuse. Payne was the boss, now. On the morrow, perhaps, he would find a way.

“I am honor’, m’sieu. Eet shall be as you say. I go now for de pack. Eet ees at de bunkhouse.”

“No, no. You sit still, Louis. Yo’re cold an’ hungry an’ wet an’— Cooky’ll bring us some grub soon. I’ll hev him git yore things.”

The big Frenchman’s puzzlement grew. No boss had ever before treated him like this. Something certainly was wrong. He shrugged his doubt, found a chair in the shadows and watched furtively.

PAYNE performed nobly as host. After supper he produced several bottles of trade whiskey. He had never dared to so much as sample the stuff himself. If there was an evil wish in the back of his head that his guest might find a master in the content of those brown bottles, this wish found speedy fulfillment. At the end of the first bottle, Louis Nikolai sang; half way through the second, he slept, balancing precariously on the chair edge.

Cooky appeared in time to help Payne put the Frenchman to bed. Cooky and his mongrel cur, “Louse.”

There was a curious bond of sympathy between the cook and the river boss. Both were little men. Both lived by their wits in a world where brawn was king. Superficially, however, the little cook lacked Payne’s most outstanding qualification—physical courage. Payne feared nothing—beast, devil or man. And he was respected accordingly.

Cooky was an arrant coward. The only time he had ever been known to show a flash of courage was in protection of his mangy dog, Louse. Cooky and Louse had been pals for so long that in many ways they had come to resemble each other. Both were undersized and scrawny, with mild, apologetic brown eyes, seemingly forever cringing; shrill, cracked voices and nagging habits. The little man's devotion to his dog was as the love of a mother for an erring son—the best thing Louse did was to err. Payne didn't like the dog. The beast was everlastingly scratching and biting himself. Louse was a fitting name.

"How're they comin'?" Payne jerked a thumb toward the bunkhouse.

Cooky lighted a cigaret and blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling.

"Good, so far. Jest sittin' aroun' a-sizin' each other up. Coghan's gang acts scared-like. They're lost without Nikolai."

Payne gently fondled his mustache and grinned.

"So far, so good, eh, Cooky? If we kin keep 'em kinda teeterin' like this over Sunday, we'll be all set. Come Monday mornin', I'll guarantee t' give 'em enough t' do t' keep 'em outa mischief. Coon didn't git hold of no liquor, did he? No? Good! He ain't a half bad feller when he's sober. Coghan's men won't start nothin' without Nikolai. An' I got him where I want him. Y'see, Cooky, I'm aimin' on runnin' them logs t' the mill 'r bust, an' then agin, Red's visitin' me next week. He'll expec' t' see a horspital here. An' if he does, he'll laugh. You know how that —— Irishman laughs. Wal, we gotta fool him somehow. Mebbe the good Lord'll give us a han'. Who kin tell?"

And the good Lord did take a hand, in a manner, however, quite unforeseen by Bat Payne.

VOICES awakened the little river boss early next morning. Harsh voices raised high in excitement. Among them he recognized Louis Nikolai's rumbling basso. At first he doubted this. With that load of bad liquor, Coghan's lamb should be dead to the world. But that was Nikolai's voice right enough. And he was in a rage. Payne tiptoed across the cold floor, opened the door a crack and peered forth in direction of the sounds. There were several men grouped about the open door at the front of the cabin. Coghan's lamb, yes; but, it was not Louis Nikolai, apparently quite sober and fresh as a daisy, that caused the breath of surprized alarm to whistle through the little man's clenched teeth. There were four others, besides Nikolai—Coghan's men, all. From cursory inspection, they had every appearance of having been run through a rock crusher. They spoke in French. Payne caught only a word here and there. But no verbal explanation was necessary. He knew; the war had begun. And there was Louis Nikolai, alive and well, two hundred pounds of concentrated malevolence, ready to lead his forces into battle. Payne groaned. Everything was tail end to. His plans had failed.

Cursing skillfully, he struggled into his damp clothes. He looked high and low for his gun, only to recall, after many valuable minutes had been wasted, that he had loaned it to Cooky to shoot the river rats that periodically stormed his kitchen.

By the time he had surreptitiously sought out the cook and secured the gun, preliminaries of the first skirmish had all been settled. The whole camp, split religiously into two factions, was making for the flat rock on the river shore, where affairs of honor were usually settled. Coon Meesick and Louis Nikolai led the way. In the immediate foreground Louse capered joyously, assured that the sole object of this ominous gathering was to afford him amusement. By reason of their relatively short legs, Cooky and the river boss brought up the rear.

"——'s t' pay, Boss. I don't know who started it. Early this mornin' they was at it, sudden-like. Expect our boys had the upper hand, account of Coon bossin' things. Nikolai ain't sech a bad feller, though. When he turned up jest now, he says t' Coon, he says, 'You an' me'll settle this thing, right now. Whoever wins is boss frum now on.' Coon didn't want to, but he says 'Yes.' An', what I mean, they won't be no question who's boss when they git through. One of 'em 'll be daid. It's sure goin' t' be a swell scrap."

Payne merely grunted.

He elbowed his way through the circle of men about the flat rock.

"What in ——'s goin' on here?"

It was a foolish question. No one answered.

Nikolai and Meesick stood in the center of the flat rock, ready for action. They hesitated briefly when the boss appeared, but displayed no intention of foregoing the battle.

"No knives an' no guns. Hand 'em over." Payne twisted his little mustache fiercely.

Nikolai obeyed promptly, laying in Payne's outstretched palm an ugly looking, double-edged knife. Meesick whipped the massy yellow hair out his eyes.

"How d' I know he ain't got a knife up his sleeve?"

"That's a chance yo're takin', big fella. You oughta be danged glad I'm a-lettin' you-all play aroun' like this. C'mon, fork over! 'S that all? Now, listen t' me! I'm sittin' in on this argyment with a gun. Any o' you boys git careless an' use anythin' excep' yore fists, an' Roger here goes into action. You know me an' you know Roger. Tha's all."

A stout hickory sapling, perhaps a dozen feet in length, wedged waist high between two rocks, served to rope off the river side of the arena. At this particular point the shore dropped fifteen perpendicular feet, to the pool, which, in flood time, as now, consisted of whorling, hurtling masses of dirty water, logs, brush and débris.

The fighters circled warily. Louse circled with them, yelping sharply. Cooky circled too, endeavoring to still the dog's untimely playfulness. But Louse would not listen to reason. Here was a game much to his liking. A game in which every one was too busy to take the time to kick him. He stopped at intervals to scratch himself, usually directly in the path of one or the other of the gladiators. When the two men finally came together, it was Louse's misfortune to be in the line of most resistance. He was painfully, but not seriously, trampled. With a startled yip, he scurried for safety. An enthusiastic bystander urged him on ungently with the toe of a boot. And then in a breath the unforeseen had happened. Ki-yiing at the top of his lungs, Louse did a nose dive under the sapling and sprawled, struggling, into the whirlpool fifteen feet below.

Almost before the dog touched the water, Cooky had crawled under the barrier. An expression of anguished torture contorting his pinched features.

The fighters had struggled erect, neither much the worse for their tentative encounter. Both were bewildered. Both curious to know what had happened. But neither dared take his eyes from the other.

Attention of the audience faltered; half of them were watching the dog's losing battle. And then, without warning, Cooky had joined the dog in the pool. He was a good swimmer, but he would be helpless in that churning race. They all knew it. Still, it was a splendid, foolish thing. Something must be done. But what to do?

Coon Meesick and Louis Nikolai joined their fickle audience. Curiosity had proved stronger than combativeness. They could fight any time. Many tongues explained what had happened. Side by side the two big men peered downward. Louis Nikolai roared something in Meesick's ear. The latter nodded. Nikolai sprang to his feet, swept the excited crowd back with outspread arms. Then he seized upon the hickory sapling and with a mighty heave wrenched it loose. The big end he placed in Coon Meesick's hands.

Ten feet below, almost hidden by muddy spray, was a narrow ledge. This ledge jutted out over the edge of the pool. Holding the big end of the sapling, Meesick rested the small end on this rocky shelf, and Nikolai let himself down the sapling, bracing against the slippery wall until he stood on the ledge. Then Meesick dropped to his knees, held the pole extended at arm's length until it reached below the ledge; its furthermost tip was lost in the spray three feet from the boiling water.

Each time he circled the pool, the cook's bobbing head came within inches of the end of the stick, but it was at once evident that he was too exhausted to grasp that slippery pole. Even if he could have grasped it, his strength would not have been equal to the task of clinging to it against the force of the rushing water. Louis Nikolai had anticipated this. There was but the one thing to do, which was, to haul the half drowned man bodily out of the pool. Question was, how best to accomplish it. Louis Nikolai did not hesitate. He slid off the ledge and, clutching the pole with his right hand, surrendered his rigid legs gradually to the hurrying water.

The strain on Meesick was tremendous; there was room for only one man up there on his end of the pole; the cords stood out in rippling knots on his thick neck; rushing blood colored his battered face a dull purple. Two men's lives and the life of a dog depended on him. If he should relinquish his hold on the sapling, if he should lose balance— Men anchored his legs below the knees with their bodies as he knelt. Nikolai's white face questioned Meesick mutely. Meesick nodded. The Frenchman dropped still lower until his body lay out flat on the surface of the pool. Only his right arm showed above the spray, white fingers clutching the end of the elastic pole.

He made no attempt to catch the cook at first. Both men maneuvered for position. Cooky was very weak. His face was gray. But his pale eyes shone hopefully. Twice in circling the pool he sought to come within the circle of Nikolai's outflung arm. Twice he failed. The third time he succeeded. Under drag of this additional weight, the sturdy sapling arched and creaked alarmingly. Coon Meesick's big body bent double under the terrible strain. But his grip did not relax. Slowly, hand over hand, a hand's breadth at a time, he drew the sapling upward. Louis Nikolai's rigid right arm, supporting his own two hundred pounds and Cooky and the dog, appeared above the brown mist.

The Frenchman's white knuckles scraped crushingly over the lip of the ledge. Blood spread quickly down his bare arm. His head and shoulders appeared above the spray. His feet pulled free of the water. Finally his knees rested on the ledge. He swayed there uncertainly for a moment, eyes half closed, face very white. Then he groped to his feet, holding the bedraggled cook under his arm like a big rag doll. Cooky was too far gone to assist himself; he could not even stand. Louse lay like a dead thing close against his master's breast. For a moment Nikolai rested, then again gripped the sapling. Willing hands now caught upon the free end of the stick over Meesick's shoulder and hauled it and its burden swiftly upward.

Coon Meesick caught Louis Nikolai in his arms when the latter tumbled, half fainting, over the top. A few minutes later when the big Frenchman's eyes fluttered open, he was still in Meesick's arms. He groped to his feet. Smiled wanly.

"We do—de good job—eh, Coon?"

"Sure enough, Louis."

They gripped hands.

Half an hour later in Payne's little cabin Cooky crouched before the pot-bellied stove, his feet in a pail of hot water. Louse, for once lacking a virulent itch, lay beside the pail, his timid, brown eyes on his master's face. Bat Payne peered out at the window in the general direction of the bunkhouse. There was a pleased grin on his weather-browned face; he fondled the no-account mustache tenderly.

"The good Lord took a hand, no mistake, Cooky. Look at 'em. Mixin' like lifelong frien's. An' Louis an' Coon shook hands. Did you see that, Cooky? Nothin' to it from now on. Nothin' but frien'ly rivalry, w'ich is as it should be. They'll work like cusses. We'll git them logs through. An' Coghan, har-har-har—"

SIX days later Red Coghan appeared. He was a bit late, having been delayed at Little Ferry on account of the high water, and did not reach Loring Camp until eleven o'clock at night.

He made directly for Bat Payne's cabin. Crossing the moonlit clearing past the bunkhouse, he was surprized to find everything so quiet. It was only eleven o'clock, and it was Saturday night. But there was a light in Payne's cabin. The hospital was there, probably. He chuckled noisily.

The little river boss was dozing before the fire. Coghan pushed open the door, then rapped loudly.

Bat came awake with a start.

"Oh — hello! You — you — slab o' diseased tripe!"

Coghan was frankly surprized at this pleasant greeting.

"An' greetings to you, ye little wart. How the —— be ye? An' how's me boys? Louis now—how's Louis? An' Coon?"

Coghan's foghorn voice filled the little room.

Bat placed forefinger gently on his pursed lips.

"Sh-h, the boys is tired out. Hard week."

He led the way, treading elaborately on tiptoe, to the bunkhouse. Paused at the half open door and grinned pleasantly up into Coghan's puzzled face.

Various weird, awe-inspiring sounds came from within, the assorted snores of twenty sleep-hungry men. Payne opened the door slowly, dramatically. A finger of moonlight pointed out a generous double bunk at the head of the long, low room. Two big bodies filled this bunk to overflowing. Two unbeautiful faces, one dark and sinister, the other blond and battered, rested side by side on the same sleazy pillow. Payne stood on tiptoe until his no-account mustache touched Red Coghan's ear.

"Lil playmates, Red, like you said."

Log Cabin Men

Conclusion

By Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The Border Breed," "Pards," etc.

The first part of story briefly retold in story form

ALTHOUGH the treaty of Utrecht brought comparative peace in the Old World, reflecting thereby on conditions in America, there still remained the question of the boundary line between Canada and the English colonies.

So, twenty years later, in 1744, when the French king declared war on George of England, this adamant period in the New World was likewise brought to a close.

The French in Canada held an uncanny power over the Indians, and were able to employ them, despite their long friendship with the colonies, against the English settlers south of the St. Lawrence River. Governor Shirley of Massachusetts was the outstanding figure of the day in his endeavor to lead the colonists against Quebec.

The settlers of North Yarmouth, in the district of Maine, were among the first to feel the treachery of their erstwhile friendly redskins.

Living in log cabins, seeking out a meager living of corn from their stumpy clearings, the settlers were on the verge of starvation. They dared not go into the forests to hunt or on to the rivers to fish for fear of Indian ambushes.

The white settlers had lived so long without being seriously molested that the generation, old enough to fight, had lost the knack of guerilla warfare. Almost daily around North Yarmouth a colonist was tricked and tomahawked while at work within calling distance of his cabin, or else was taken prisoner and sent to Canada.

Joshua Dresser, a veteran of Anne's and William's wars in England, and Philip Burnham, a scout on Governor Shirley's business, were the first to meet in the Yarmouth settlement that agreed that the old mode of fighting would have to be revived—that the Indians would have to be met with their own game.

They talked long hours of old wars and old times, and Dresser expressed a desire to return to Massachusetts with Burnham, to join Shirley's expedition against the French in Quebec.

Burnham replied:

"I'd suspect you must have been a mighty good fighting man in your day."

Dresser was indignant.

"In my day?" he cried. "I'm in my day now. I can l'arn you something about woods fighting."

This led to a small scouting expedition near the settlement, Dresser carrying a scythe.

"What are you going to do with the scythe, grandad?" Burnham asked laughingly.

"Cut the redskins' heads off," he replied.

And he did—killing several Indians on the trip, while Burnham killed none.

"Guess you'll do," remarked Burnham without a smile as he took leave of the settlement.

The two men set out for Massachusetts. Before they reached the next settlement they saved from an Indian attack Nahum Jessraday and a woman, who had been for corn at the nearest mill.

Jessraday, admiring the method of fighting of the rescuers, asked to join them.

As they walked along Jessraday amused them by telling of a dream he had twice a year—a dream of an Indian on horseback with coins on his eyes, who was always attempting to kill him. In each dream, he claimed, the Indian came nearer to him. When he should dream that the coins fell from the redskin's eyes, then he said he knew he should be killed.

During the day they put another band of Indians to rout, killing several of them. That night as they attempted to gain shelter in an old settler's cabin, they were attacked by another band of redskins. After a stiff fight they gained the cabin, but instead of finding old Ezra Pringle, they found an Indian dressed in the old man's clothes. Pringle was found tomahawked in his bed, but no trace was found of his niece who lived with him.

Just as they thought the redskins had run away

"Log Cabin Men," copyright, 1926, by Hugh Pendexter.

in defeat a piece of bark fell on Burnham's hand. He whispered:

"One's on the roof."

THIS discovery was the forerunner of another attack. Being unable to gain the cabin through the white men's rifle fire, the redskins shot burning fagots at the building until it caught fire.

The men inside despaired.

"We'll go out," said Burnham. "We'll make them kill us fighting."

The smoke and fire was becoming intense. The men opened the door, and before them was a strange sight.

The Indians were scattering like frightened sheep, and from the forest on the other side of the clearing came unholy sounds, like the howling of demons.

A girl came into the clearing playing the bagpipes.

"It's Pringle's niece. She has been hiding in the woods," said Jessraday.

The girl, Hoped-For Robson, was dazed in her fright, but was soon comforted, and was persuaded to join the three scouts as far as Albany.

They camped in the woods that night and reached Rochester before noon the next day. On the second day they reached Fort Massachusetts, and Burnham placed Hoped-For in the care of his sister, Nancy Wilks. Nancy saw matrimonial advantages for her brother and Hoped-For, but Burnham laughed at the idea, saying—

"She's just a child."

Leaving the girl at the fort, the three men finished the journey to Albany. Arrived there, Burnham chanced to be in a gunsmith's shop when a man came in and muttered in Dutch—

"*Von über bringer hab ein stück silber.*"

Later in the day, when talking to Col. William Johnson, Burnham told what he had overheard.

"That makes a double purpose for your trip," Johnson exclaimed. "Besides scouting above Saratoga to see what the French are up to, keep your eyes open for men smuggling guns. That man in the smith's shop was Stirick, a smuggler. If you find the guns and can't bring them back, destroy them. I'll send Gingego, a Mohawk war-chief, with you."

As they were talking, shots were fired, and a man cried—

"I've been robbed by John Boyce, counterfeiter of Rhode Island bills."

The shooting was aimed at three men, apparently involved in smuggling the guns, but they all escaped across the river.

Gingego and Burnham started out after them. They soon arrived at Half Moon, where they found an invalid white man, an escaped prisoner from the French. Burnham identified him as the lost man, Gorton, from North Yarmouth. Gorton was reassured of a rescue, and in turn gave information about the trail of the gun smugglers.

STIRICK, the smuggler, and his hirelings, Ben Tugg, Boyce, the Leveler, and Till, fully believed they had shaken their followers and, on the third night settled themselves comfortably for a drinking bout until they should be met by the Frenchman, LeBlanc, who would take the smuggled guns from them.

They had not long to wait. LeBlanc, accompanied by two Indians, arrived while they were in the midst of drinking and arguing as to whether they would be paid for their services in paper money or gold. One of the Indians had no sooner surveyed the scene than he announced that the place smelled of blood and that he feared for their safety.

LeBlanc tried to allay his fears by producing a keg of rum. The drinking proceeded, and as the high peak was reached, LeBlanc announced:

"I bring rare news, Monsieur Boyce. What will you say when I tell you Monsieur Rigaud de Vaudreuil is at Fort St. Frederic with a large war-party? Such a blow he will strike the English!"

This, with the confusing influence of the rum, led to arguments, whispered words between LeBlanc and Stirick.

And again Two Deaths, the Indian, said—

"I smell blood."

"And well you should," replied LeBlanc. "Monsieur Rigaud is near this place now with a vast army of men. We will settle for the guns now."

Came the settlement, LeBlanc obviously getting the better of the deal. There were more words, all hostile and snarling, and the tension grew. Tugg was so drunk that nothing but a fight would satisfy him.

"We'll be going now!" said Boyce, sensing trouble.

And before the words were out of his mouth, Tugg's broken sword was through the neck of the Indian. A pandemonium of cries broke loose. Stirick, the Indians and LeBlanc were killed; others disappeared into the woods.

As the fighting died down, Tugg heard a noise from the river and instantly took it for the French army.

Burnham and Gingego bounded into the firelight. Burnham charged:

"You're Boyce, the counterfeiter!"

"No, I'm Boyce, the Leveler. When things get rough, I level them out."

Burnham announced that the French army was close behind and that no time was to be lost in beating them to the fort. So Tugg, Boyce and Till hastily climbed into canoes and started with Burnham and Gingego for the fort. All night and the next day they traveled by land and water, and arrived at the stockade barely before the French and Indian advance scouts arrived on the surrounding hills.

At the fort he found his sister and Hoped-For, and all his persuasive talk could not induce Nancy to leave the fort and her invalid husband. His information regarding the oncoming French and Indian armies aroused Sergeant Hawks, in command of the fort, to exclaim:

"The women and children must be gotten away. They can be hidden in the woods until the worst of the attack is over or can start for the nearest settlement."

But inasmuch as Nancy refused to leave, Hoped-For also refused.

There were several false alarms of the attack, but none of the enemy actually left the woods to approach the fort till toward twilight. Hoped-For, during the afternoon, played on her bagpipes, stirring the men in the fort to thoughts of bravery in battle and starting a shudder of fear in the Indians in the hills above the fort.

Once, when the Indians appeared in the clearing, actually bent on attacking, Ben Tugg climbed to the top of the stockade with a knife in his mouth and, standing on the top, ran the knife around his false wig, then pulled it off, showing a head daubed with bright red paint. The Indians fled to the woods in terror, thinking he had scalped himself, and still lived. This was a drawback for the French, and at dusk there was no marked sign of attack. But off in the woods the screams of an Indian war-dance predicted all the horror of the impending trouble.

THE noise of the French and Indian camp lasted far into the night. Burnham grew restless, and begged of Sergeant Hawks to make a scouting expedition for powder, the ammunition of the fort being practically exhausted. Hawks granted his request, finally, and Burnham carried out his plans.

He soon found the enemy's sentinels too thick for any real gain. He encountered several, sometimes passing as a Frenchman and sometimes being compelled to kill the Indian guards before they were aware of his presence.

Before dawn the French showed a white flag, and Rigaud and some of his officers entered the fort. The Frenchmen pointed out that the colonists had no powder, that resistance meant complete slaughter.

"We will take you to Canada, and you shall all have good treatment until we can trade you as hostages. You will be safe from the hands of the redmen, and I give you my word of honor as a Frenchman and a gentleman."

This from Rigaud. The colonists asked for a few hours' deliberation.

And when daylight came Burnham climbed to the top of the fort and waved a white flag.

The Indians were bloodthirsty, but were held in check by the French, especially after they were allowed to hold some of the Englishmen as prisoners. Burnham declared that Rigaud was breaking his word, and Riguad returned:

"If you will have it so, all right. But it is better than to see you slaughtered. The Indians want their bounty money."

So Burnham volunteered to be the prisoner of Gainengoton, chief of the Sault Saint Louis tribe, and a few others followed his example by surrendering to other chiefs.

Ben Tugg tried to surrender as a prisoner, but the Indians claimed he was bad medicine, this man who scalped himself. The proclaimed Hoped-for as good medicine because the music of her bagpipes stirred them to great emotions. And after Burnham told the chiefs about Jessraday's dream of the horseman with coins in his eyes, they held that he was also bad medicine and feared to have him near them.

As they proceeded to Canada the hardships became intensified. The Indians and their prisoners did not travel with the French. Gainengoton knew Burnham to be a great chief and adopted him as his son. The Indian, with Burnham and Tugg, arrived at Fort Frederic, held by the French. Gainengoton tried to get Tugg to leave them, but Ben refused. He declared that he would rather be taken captive by the French than to wander in the woods alone.

The Indian chief, leaving Burnham for the night, went to report to the fort. During his absence several of the French scouts, on duty in the environs, talked with Burnham and Tugg, begging for news of the outside world.

Sounds came from the fort all night, signifying that a great French-Indian feast was in progress. In the morning Burnham was escorted to the fort by officers and was questioned. And during this time the French dropped information that would be highly valuable to the English. During the conversation the matter of the killing of the LeBlanc and the two Indian chiefs came up, and a French officer said—

"Whoever had a hand in the killing shall hang!"

Berler, one of the gun smugglers, was there, making accusations right and left. The place became a veritable court-room.

"Make way for the prisoners!" a soldier shouted.

At the end of a long lane of men stood Tugg, Jessraday and Dresser. Burnham towered above them all. One of the smugglers pointed to Tugg and shouted:

"This wizened —— killed Black Wind and Two Deaths. Could I ever forget such a monkey of a man?"

Tugg yelled in rage and darted at the smuggler, but the chief clutched him and drew him back. Then De Noyan, one of the officers, asked the smuggler—

"Would you know any of the other men who were on the point when LeBlanc was killed?"

"Yes. There was a man who called himself the Leveler, and he took LeBlanc's gold and silver. He— That man there— That man standing back of the Indian!"

He broke off to point a quivering finger at Burnham.

"DID he kill LeBlanc?" thundered the commandant, and he pushed men aside so the borderer stood fully revealed.

Berler stared glassy-eyed for a moment into the frowning face of Burnham, then cried:

"No, no! The Leveler killed LeBlanc. That man came from the woods with the Indian. They killed Stirick and then came to the fire. I saw them from the edge of the woods."

All eyes were on Burnham, and all were waiting for him to speak. Nodding at Berler, he slowly said:

"That man is a traitor to his country. Why should he be believed? He is afraid some prisoner will recognize him and talk about him after being exchanged and back in the colonies."

"You talk well, Monsieur Smooth-Tongue," said Dumont. "But I believe the man is telling the truth. He should remember that night when his arm was broken."

"I was captured at Fort Massachusetts and came here as the prisoner of the Red Bird. I am to be adopted as his son. Chew on that and be ——."

De Noyan gestured to his lieutenant to be silent. Burnham he sternly warned:

"If you are guilty as charged by this

Albany man, you shall receive French justice. Rigaud needed those guns. If you put your hand into French fire, you must expect to be burned."

"If I'm to burn, it will be at a red stake and not under a French torch, m'sieur."

"I spoke figuratively." To Gainengoton he said, "Will my son put this man in the fort where he can not get away?"

"Why should a war-chief of the Sault Saint Louis band need a white man to hold his prisoner? We will open a bag of talk at a council tonight. Until Gainengoton has spoken let Onontio's white children keep away from the man who wears the wampum of a chief. It is his road-belt. He comes and goes, and no man is to say 'go there,' 'come here,' except Gainengoton. The man who scalps himself belongs to the tribes. They will say what shall be done with him. Till then he is our prisoner."

He turned and took the paddles from Dresser and Jessraday and put them in the canoe. Then he motioned for Burnham and Tugg to enter. Burnham passed close to Jessraday in entering the canoe, and the latter murmured:

"We must act soon. The Indians plan to take us to Montreal in a few days."

"The first chance," muttered Burnham.

De Noyan stared vindictively at Burnham, but his face cleared when he faced Gainengoton. Hérbin whispered—

"We can rush the two of them into the fort."

"Are you crazy, Monsieur Herbin." To the chief he said, "Onontio's red son is like a stout shield. He is like a war-arrow. When he takes the war-path we break open goods to pay for his scalps and prisoners. We know the two white men will stay with him. We know the Red Bird would hang his head in shame if, in a council, he had to stand and say two white men ran away from him. We will smoke and talk. If the Ottawa and Potawatomi men will take presents for the little man, Onontio's son will open his hands. If the Red Bird would fill his house on the Saint Lawrence with gifts, Onontio has many to send him."

"Monsieur, here comes Captain Rigaud," informed Dumont.

Rigaud, weary from hours of work in issuing rations and replacing broken and lost guns and paying bounties for scalps as well as from participating in the night's red revels, came up slowly. He had been aroused from much needed sleep by a clamor of voices, and was told something of the situation.

He halted and cast a swift glance over the gathering and noted the Mohawk chief about to enter the canoe holding the two white men. He bowed to the commandant and gave him polite greetings. De Noyan made a courteous reply, and then continued:

"Monsieur, your coming is timely. The small man in the chief's canoe is accused of killing a Potawatomi and an Ottawa at the point above when LeBlanc went to receive the guns sent up to us from Albany. LeBlanc, as you know, was murdered, as was also an Albany man. You warriors say the small man surrendered to them, yet will now claim him as a prisoner. They talk as if he belonged to all the tribes and to no one man."

He paused and pointed at Tugg.

"I believe he surrendered himself. I did not surrender him," said Rigaud.

"But he couldn't pick and choose to whom he would surrender," said De Noyan.

Burnham spoke in a loud voice, saying:

"Like others of us, he was driven to surrender himself when M'sieur Rigaud found he could not keep his promise. To save his face he urged some of us to go with the Indians. Four of us did so. Then he turned over to the Indians all the fort soldiers."

"*Sacre bleu!* Will you hold your tongue!" cried De Noyan.

Rigaud darted a vicious glance at the borderer, and told the commandant:

"The Indians assume he is their prisoner, monsieur. But no one man will claim him. They believe he is medicine."

"I'm confident they'll claim him now," said De Noyan. "He killed a Potawatomi and an Ottawa."

Rigaud stared wrathfully at Tugg and said:

"That's as it should be. He should pay for his sins."

"If the Indians do not want him, then France does. Can you persuade your Indians to give him up? When it's known in Albany that men who bring guns to us are killed, then that trade will be at an end. The men he killed were fort Indians. So your Indians are not so deeply concerned. But he has the *fleur-de-lis* deep in his chest and his ears are cropped. At some time he worked much evil against France. France wants him. Persuade your Indians to trade him to us for the bounty."

"I will try, monsieur. But this is not the time nor place. I must talk apart with the chiefs before holding a council. But the man I would pronounce to be the more dangerous is the big one."

And he indicated Burnham. De Noyan frowned slightly and reminded:

"He is the prisoner of the Red Bird. We must wait. Talk with the chiefs about the other rascal. Offer them many presents." To Gainengoton, who had followed much of the talk, he said, "The white man will not go away?"

"Where Gainengoton goes, he goes."

With this terse reply he entered the canoe and directed the borderer and sea-robber to paddle for the mill.

AFTER landing and drawing up the canoe, Burnham said to his captor:

"Onontio's son tells me many big French canoes are coming over the big water to attack New England. Is it talked about among the Kaniengehaga?"

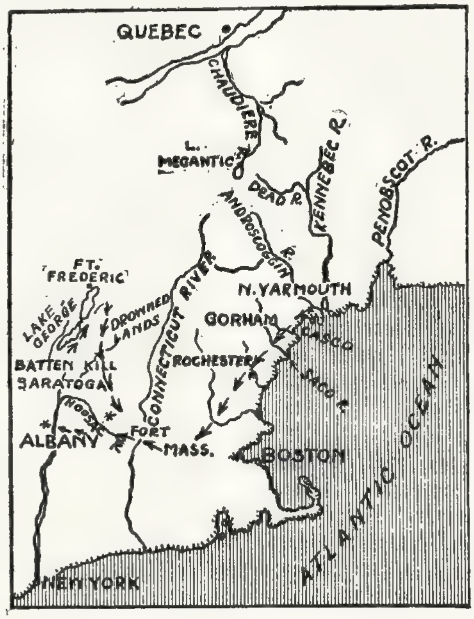
"Many big canoes are coming. When Boston and New York burn, we will push the English into the big water and burn all the towns. The Long House will take up the French ax and stop listening to evil voices."

"The Long House will never hold to the chain of friendship with the French," said Burnham. "They say Waraghjago is a greater chief than any of Onontio's sons."

Gainengoton was silent for a minute, then replied:

"We will not fight our brothers. They will stand beside us when they know the Great Onontio has burned the towns of the English. All the English will be killed or pushed into the water."

Burnham made no more talk, but sat with hands clasped around his knees, and his gaze directed to the south. Racing through his mind was the conviction that De Noyan and his officers had been sincere in saying a huge French fleet of many sails was coming to attack the coast and retake Louisburg. Reason told him this was the logical maneuver for the French to make if they would retain any prestige among the tribes. Nor did he believe that even Colonel Johnson could hold the Five Nations in check once they learned the French had won a victory on the coast. From the beginning of the war the Senecas had been partial to the French emissaries among them, and the Onondagas were wavering. With two of the Three Elder Brothers, at the best, lukewarm toward the colonies, and the third brother, the Mohawks, opposed to fighting their converted relatives in Canada, it was of imperative importance that the hostile fleet be decisively defeated. The all important question was: Did Shirley and Clinton know the French were coming? It was not suspected when he talked with Colonel Johnson at the Albany fort. No word to that effect had reached Fort Massachusetts during his brief stay there. The all important problem was how to escape and reach the lower Hudson with the news.



Gainengoton broke in on his brooding by asking—

"Was my son at the point when the men were killed?"

"He was there with Ginego."

"Ginego is a great chief. Did my son kill Onontio's man or Two Deaths or the Black Wind?"

"No. Gingego fired a gun at the Albany man called Berler and broke his arm. A man called Till killed Stirick."

The chief was silent for a minute, then remarked:

"Many moons ago the Red Bird heard talk about the man Till. He was at Oswego. He stopped the traders from cheating the tribes in the rum-trade— The man who scalps himself killed two brave men. Were they asleep?"

"No. Their medicine told them to attack him. It was one small man against two big men. He fought with a long knife."

"Their medicine was sick. The little man's *orenda* was strong. He will do the tribes great honor if he is sent to the fire," declared the chief with a side glance of admiration at Tugg.

Burnham was alarmed. Gainengoton's words intimated the possibility of Tugg being tortured. He reminded:

"My new father said the little man could go where he would. That the tribes did not want him."

"None of the eastern warriors will touch him. The men he killed came from Detroit. Their brothers are wild men. Who knows what they will do if given brandy. The eastern warriors will not touch the little man to burn him or to save him. His *orenda* must save him if he lives. He can go where he will so far as the Kaniengehaga are concerned."

"Then he can start now and walk south through the woods or paddle up the creek?" quickly asked Burnham.

The chief bowed his head. Then said—

"But others go before him."

Burnham followed the direction of his gaze and saw a canoe moving swiftly along the opposite point and hastening up Wood Creek. Three soldiers were in it. Tugg was impatient to know what had been said.

"What's the red fool mouthing about?" he sharply demanded.

"He says you're a very brave man."

"——! As if I didn't know that."

And he increased the chief's respect by loudly shouting the ballad of Blackbeard.

Gainengoton described a large circle with his waving arm and announced:

"This is the camp. The soldiers in the mill will give you meat and bread. You will be here not more than one sleep. The man who scalps himself can go where he will. If he walks into the woods, the men in the mill will follow him. If he paddles up the river, men will be ahead of him. Tell him if he runs away and is caught he becomes the prisoner of the man who catches him. Only white men are up the river."

"Will he be traded to the French if he stays close by a chief's fire?"

"That is to be talked about tonight. The eastern warriors will not trade him. Who knows what the men from Detroit and Michilimackinac will say when on fire with brandy?"

Gainengoton went to the mill and, in a few words of French, explained that the prisoners were to receive rations for the short time they were there. The soldiers, except the lookout on top of the mill, came to talk with the prisoners. Gainengoton walked into the woods to consult his *orenda*.

Tugg was ready to talk. He soon had the soldiers laughing, and Burnham knew he was making an effort to be agreeable. As a reward for his lively remarks and grotesque antics one of them brought him a large dram of brandy. He swaggered and sang and swore old oaths, and greatly relieved the deadly monotony of the mill garrison.

Burnham's gaze grew somber as he watched and listened. Three weeks back he would have laughed at the idea of ever feeling concern for the old rascal's fate. Throughout the trip from New Hampshire he had resented the man's presence. By his own boasting the sea-robber was guilty of many heinous crimes. He was a murderer. The most charitable estimate could find but one wholesome quality in him—he was courageous far beyond the point where most men's courage ended. And courage along any frontier during the many years of savagery was a monumental virtue. Were he sent to the torture, Burnham believed he would die as insolently and defiantly as he had lived. Had fate given a different twist to his path in the beginning he might have been a leader of armies or the admiral of a conquering fleet.

"Why so long-faced, my roaring boy?" cried Tugg.

Burnham jerked up his head and saw the soldiers were returning to the mill.

"I've been thinking."

"—— my liver! I know. You smell death. Fire the magazine, boys, and up we go! That's the spirit! Give me another helping of brandy and I'll be seeing Jolly Ned. But, harkee, my stout lad. See that I have a knife if they try any tricks with me. If I can fire the magazine I can slash my throat and cheat 'em."

"I'll promise to do my best if they begin to torture you."

"There now! That's handsome. Handsomely said. Teach would have taken to you like a Red Seaman to a dram or to an island woman. Over the side with a shot at my feet or by lead or knife. I ain't squeamish, my boy. But I do hate to comfort the —— papists by dying by inches."

CHAPTER XII

AND TWO BROKE THROUGH

EARLY in the evening Gaspard and another came to the shore. Gaspard told Tugg:

"We're crossing to see what they will do with you. If you make them laugh as you've made us, they'll keep you filled with brandy and let you live."

"Aye, aye. Old Ben has made his mates forget death itself afore now, my brave boy. In the swamps of Panama, in the Red Sea and off the black coast of Africa with the water rotten with worms and cannibals waiting for us if we went ashore. You see, my boy, I've led a simple life and love to see men happy. 'Simple Old Ben,' they called me. But there should be a noggin of drink here for me."

"Hardly a drink for the men who remain on guard, old simpleton. You drank the last. We shall bring a jug if not too drunk," chuckled Gaspard.

Burnham lifted his head and gazed thoughtfully at the soldiers, who were in a hilarious mood at the chance to cross to the fort and make merry. He followed them to the edge of the water and looked across at the lights. Switching his gaze to left and right, he noted a dugout and several canoes within a rod of him. After the Frenchmen were afloat he turned to Tugg and murmured:

"Listen, old man, and remember. If, after we've crossed to the fort, I tell you to come back here and take two canoes and paddle across to the west shore of the point and follow it south until half a mile above the fort, lose not a second in doing as told. Take the rope from the dugout for a tow line. On gaining your position above the fort you'll wait an hour unless the enemy chase you away. If we do not show up or if there's signs of pursuit, beach one canoe and make off in the other. You must make the Hudson and tell the officer commanding at Saratoga that a French fleet is coming to attack Boston. You will proceed down the river, telling what I've told you to every loyal man you reach. Tell it at the fort in Albany. Then keep on to New York and tell Governor Clinton."

"They'll toss a shot across my bow if I try to leave the fort."

"When I give the word, you'll be free to come and go as you will. Here is another belt. When we land at the fort, go to the camp of the prisoners at the first chance and tell Dresser and Jessraday that I am trying to escape tonight. Tell them about the French fleet. Tell them they must cut across the point from the quarry to where you'll be waiting with the canoes. I shall not have a chance to visit the prisoners. Perhaps they can come to me. You are to make south alone if they do not show up. The three of you are to race for it if I fail to come."

"Aye. That's plain enough, my lad. But I'm in strange waters and it's shoaling fast. We'll all soon be aground. With no magazine to touch off. Remember, limbs of oak, Old Ben is in desperate need of a knife. A small one will do. Only black magic can help me make the crossing to this place, and I'll need the devil's help to get clear again with two canoes. The two men behind us in the mill will run to meet me when I come back."

"Until your fate's decided you're free to come and go. With the soldiers carousing, you should be able to pick up a jug of brandy. If you can bring that here to the men in the mill, you'll have small trouble in leaving with the two canoes."

"And be picked up while trying to cross over to the point! Or be caught while waiting for you."

"——, man! Can you pick and choose? Where's your guts? Do you want to be branded again or go into an Ottawa kettle?"

"Gently and softly, my boy. I was marking my bearings. It's a dead man's chance and Old Ben will take it. But I wish the guns in the mill threw heavier metal! I'd cut the throats of the soldiers and turn the guns loose on the fort and make De Noyan think satan was snapping his tail."

Gainengoton came through the dusk and stopped their talk. Burnham greeted, "A chief has been medicine-hunting."

"A chief has heard much wise talk from an owl. Blood will soon color the water between here and the Hudson."

And his voice suggested depression.

"Much blood will run when the English come. The bears know it and are gathering to eat the dead. Wolves howl on the mountains, smelling blood," said Burnham. "If the Iroquois of the Sault are wise men, they will go away."

Gainengoton was silent for a minute, then said:

"The owl said the blood would be white and red. The Red Bird and his men do not run. The owl says nothing about the English Long Knives. It is something else. The Red Bird will shake his head hard so he can think. The little man who scalps himself may die. But how can a warrior die? No Long Knives are near this place. Onontio's son at the fort says none will come. Still the owl speaks with a straight tongue. His medicine is very strong. White and red will be killed."

"Why should the little man die? Who will strike a man who is medicine?"

"White men will strike with a heavy hand if he is given to them."

"Gainengoton has said he will not give the little man to the French. The little man's *orenda* is very powerful. It will be angry."

The chief glanced uneasily at Tugg, who had removed his big wig and was rubbing his bald head, and explained:

"The men of the Sault Saint Louis Mohawks will not give the little man to Onontio. Who knows what the warriors from Detroit and Michilimackinac will do? They have two dead men to cover."

This was Burnham's first definite intimation that the savages had decided upon Tugg's fate. The eastern warriors, fearing his medicine or *orenda*, would disclaim all responsibility and allow the western savages to pronounce sentence. Tugg would be put to the torture or traded to the French.

"He's talking about Old Ben. By ——! You can't fool me, my boy!" exploded Tugg.

"A council of western Indians will decide what's to be done with you. Until a decision is reached you'll be free to come and go. You've had chances to escape and haven't take them. They're not afraid of your trying it now. It will be much harder for you to get away. I shall be closely watched. The chief will keep at my side. De Noyan's men will keep an eye on me."

Gainengoton abruptly announced—

"It is time."

An owl hooted dismally beyond the mill.

"Your child hears you, grandfather. He goes!" humbly cried the chief.

And he made haste to place a birch in the water and command the two prisoners to enter.

Eager to make the crossing and perfect his dubious plans for escape, Burnham wielded a paddle energetically. The canoe was soon drawn up on the west side of the point where several big fires were blazing some fifty yards apart. Already men from the garrison were under the influence of drink and were walking about, singing and mingling with the Indians. Brandy had been given to the savages also, but not enough to make them intractable. Later, when more drink was given out, their mood would be different. Already the western warriors had appointed men to keep sober and guard the weapons in some hidden place in anticipation of the madness that would seize upon those permitted to get drunk.

GASPARD, already partly intoxicated, was the first to greet the canoe, and in a loud voice complained:

"There must be a sorcerer among you Bostonnais. Many of Rigaud's men are sick and some of the garrison are sick since the prisoners were brought here."

"Sickness is catching. M'sieur Rigaud captured a sick garrison," reminded Burnham.

"That is all very well," sullenly said Gaspard. "But if the sickness fastens on the Indians, they'll have your hair hanging over a kettle of potage."

"The sorcerer can not love the prisoners. They are all sick," insisted Burnham.

For he knew if this idea took root, the superstitious soldiers as well as the ghost-ridden Indians would be quick to exterminate every man, woman and child brought from Fort Massachusetts.

Gaspard blinked heavily and thickly admitted there was sense in what Burnham said. But he added—

"You can't reason that into a red skull, M'sieur In-Much-Trouble."

Burnham changed the talk by remarking:

"I left your comrades at the mill very thirsty. They fear you will get drunk and forget to carry brandy back to them. They asked me to ask you to place a jug in your canoe now while you remember. Then they can have a feast when you return."

"That's a good talk," gravely admitted Gaspard. "The only one a Bostonnais ever made, and a Frenchman had to put it in his mouth. I'll cache a jug in my canoe now."

And he hurried away to complete his philanthropy.

"You heard the talk, Tugg. You understand?"

"A blind man could read the course. You're wiser than an old witch-doctor I knew on the island of Madagascar. That leg of my cruise is as good as finished, once I make the mill. Now I'll beat down to the prisoners' camp. There's red reefs a-plenty between here and there."

He referred to the groups of whooping, gesticulating savages.

Gainengoton stared after him as he swaggered away, carrying his wig in his hand. His insolence was superb as he strutted through the groups of half drunken soldiers and the excited savages. Some of the soldiers jeered him and hinted at certain cures for his haughty bearing. The Indians were not yet mad enough to offer him violence, but were emboldened to a certain degree by their drams. Almost all of them withdrew, scowling fiercely, as he approached. A few were slow to get out of his path, and these he struck with his wig, whereat they scrambled aside quickly enough. But although remembering he was medicine and while fearing him, yet a deadly hate glowed in their black eyes.

"The ghosts of my uncle and my grandfather, the owl, are whispering that blood will run," muttered Gainengoton as he watched the stunted figure of the sea-robber.

De Noyan came up to the fire, exquisitely dressed and bearing himself as if in some Paris salon, and bowed with mock politeness and stared coldly at the borderer. Of Gainengoton he asked—

"Where is the other man, the one who has no hair, great chief of the Saint Louis people?"

"His *orenda* gives him road-belts. Ask his *orenda* where he walks," replied the chief.

"His *orenda* will be weak when he is among the men from the Strait and La Baye,*" said De Noyan significantly.

"The men of the Sault Saint Louis can not be hurt for what Detroit and Michilimackinac do," the chief muttered uneasily.

"It will be better for Onontio's red son and his people if the small man is given to the French," advised De Noyan. "Then his ghost can never cry around a Mohawk house. The French are not afraid of his ghost. The Black Robes will scare it away."

Gainengoton was uncomfortable, but persisted:

"The little medicine man has not been in the Red Bird's hands. The Ottawas and the Potawatomis will say what will be done with him."

"Superstition is a wonderful thing, m'sieur," observed Burnham.

De Noyan lowered on him and sternly said:

"We've been talking about you. We believe you planned the attack on LeBlanc and are as guilty of his murder as if your hand killed him."

"M'sieur will think what he will. I had no hand in LeBlanc's death. I would have killed him if I had had a chance, but the privilege was denied me."

De Noyan turned his back on him and urged:

"Let Gainengoton trade this man for many goods. This man is not the son of the Red Bird yet. His name has not been called. Give him to your father, Onontio, and take five guns and many shoots of powder and much bright cloth for your women. His *orenda* is white and will always work against a red *orenda*."

"THE Red Bird will not trade the white man," firmly replied the chief. "He wears a chief's wampum that will open all roads to him. He has been left alone and has not tried to run away."

"He will never run away so long as he wears the Red Bird's wampum," declared Burnham.

De Noyan shrugged his shoulders and told Burnham:

"We'll get that undersized ——. He's been through French hands before. As for you, if you make one slip—"

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*Green Bay. Never called that by the French.

"Of course," indifferently supplied Burnham as the commandant left his threat unfinished. "That is to be expected of the French. But if I snap my fingers under your nose, m'sieur, you dare not resent it openly unless you are willing to lose your Mohawks."

"*Mon Dieu!* Until conditions change that is true. All for France! I will walk on before you tempt me too far."

He hurried away as if fearing Burnham would insult him.

This talk disturbed Gainengoton. The unwritten law governing the possession of prisoners was punctiliously observed by the French. Yet De Noyan was one of the great Onontio's favorite children and was very powerful. He could give lavishly. If the Sault warriors learned their chief had refused many gifts for one man, they would not like it. The chief was as determined as ever never to surrender his prisoner, and yet he almost wished he never had accepted him or, having done so, had not announced his intention of adopting him.

Some of the western savages came up and made derisive gestures at Burnham and took dancing steps around him and howled like dogs and pretended to bite him. A Chippewa man, wearing the head of a buffalo, violated red etiquette by trying to butt him in the chest. Gainengoton quickly stepped in front of his prisoner and received the blow. As the blow had not been intended for him and was not delivered by the hand, he could not hold himself to be insulted. But there was death in the black eyes as he placed his hands on the half drunken savage's shoulders and easily held him an arm's length. He warned:

"There is an evil spirit in this man's drink. It leads him close to ghosts. An owl in the woods on the east shore told me in the woods tonight that blood would be spilled. Let this man's brothers take him away. Gainengoton has said it."

Sufficiently sobered by this threat, several men caught the Chippewa by the arms and dragged him away. The buffalo head got twisted around, and all but suffocated the man. Burnham thanked the chief by saying—

"My red father took the blow that was meant for me."

"He took a blow so he would not have to kill a man. Eyes filled with strong drink do not always see road-belts. Keep close to me. Strike no man if he strikes you. A chief has taken a blow. His new son can take one."

GAINENGOTON was reluctant, however, to approach the camp of the prisoners where most of the western warriors were carousing. If a man, seeing his wampum around Burnham's neck, struck the prisoner, the act must be construed as an insult to the chief and must be resented on the spot. The chief stiffened and watched sharply as a naked Micmac, waving a torch, ran frantically down the point, screaming like a madman. Despite the disarming of the Indians, several squaws in the red camp were ever trying to reach their masters and give them a skinning-knife. On the whole, however, the guard managed to prevent this violation of the rules, while a strong guard of middle-aged warriors protected the prisoners' camp.

After a lapse of almost an hour Tugg returned with several Ottawas and Potawatomis walking behind and on both sides of him. They kept at a respectable distance and gave no signs of being drunk. Gainengoton told Burnham:

"They are the men to hold the council. They will not drink until they have passed the club. Their talk will be wise and not foolish. They will either give the little man to the French or burn him. A voice says they will drop the club."

"That means they will say to burn him. How can my red father know that?"

"They keep close so he can not run away without being followed. If they would give him to Onontio they would tell Onontio to put him in a strong place until they had passed the club. They would talk at once, so they could drink. Their medicine-men have told them the little man's medicine can not hurt them. They will cover Two Deaths and the Black Wind with bones and ashes."

Tugg's bearing was as insolent and defiant as ever as he swaggered up to the fire, but there was disquiet in his yellow eyes.

"They hem me in all the time," he whispered. "Remember your promise. No torture for Old Ben. I'll never get a chance to make the other shore."

"We must find a chance. We must make a chance some way. Gaspard has placed a jug of brandy in his canoe. You will cross in that. Did you see our friends?"

"Jessraday. Dresser was with the women. I told him all. He will tell Dresser. He says they will try to escape while the savages are holding a council. But they'll find no canoe waiting for them. You will have no chance to escape."

"——! Stop croaking. Can't you think of anything but failure? Shall a parcel of drunken, naked savages stop two fighting men like you and me? There will come a minute when you will have a chance to steal the canoe and the jug of brandy. If possible to steal the second canoe here, you'd have no need to cross to the mill. But the light from the fire, the delay in fastening a tow line won't allow that. You must get a start before you're missed. Now stay by me, and when the lucky minute comes, be ready to move fast."

The escort of western Indians fell back a considerable distance and, satisfied that Tugg intended remaining with Gainengoton's prisoner, they gradually withdrew toward their camp. Lieutenant Dumont and Doty, Rigaud's interpreter, were the next visitors. Dumont announced:

"The warriors from the west will soon open a big bag of talk. Onontio's son will be there. Gainengoton is asked to be there. Some of the Sault warriors have drank and lost their heads. Gainengoton can help them find their heads."

"The Red Bird will help his children find their heads," said the chief.

Burnham knew the crisis was upon him and Tugg. The latter asked—

"What did that Frenchman say?"

"They are about to sit in council. The chief will be there and take us with him," was the grim reply.

"Ned Teach! Stand by! I'll heave-to alongside of you this night," groaned Tugg. "Remember your promise!"

"If it comes to that I will throw an ax. I can't get a gun. But you'll never know what hit you," muttered Burnham, his face wet with sweat as he pictured the grim rôle he must play unless the miraculously unexpected intervened.

"I'll thank the ax," whispered Tugg. "But a knife would be wholesome. Why an ax if you can't get a knife to toss me?"

Burnham jerked his thumb, calling Tugg's attention to the chief's French tomahawk carried; after the Iroquois fashion, in the back of his belt.

They stood in silence, waiting. There came the smart *rat-tat-tat* of a drum, and a small lad, scarcely taller than his drum, emerged from the fort and stiffly matched up the point. After him marched soldiers in double file, dressed in their best, the metal of their muskets gleaming, so as to do honor to their red allies and, incidentally, be present to preserve order. De Noyan and his two lieutenants came last. The drum led the way for a quarter of a mile and halted a few rods from the council fire. The lines opened for the drummer to march to the rear and escort the commandant and his officers to the front. Doty joined the commandant and, preceded by the drum, advanced to the outskirts of the western Indians' camp.

The drum gave the long roll. Then through the interpreter De Noyan announced he had come as the great Onontio's representative to do honor to the Ottawa and Potawatomi men who were to hold the council. From the camp filed twelve men with blankets over their heads. Their leader, an old man, fell in beside the commandant. The drummer wheeled about smartly and the procession approached the fire, the hooded men walking in single file behind their leader and De Noyan.

The commandant halted some distance from the fire so his presence might not be considered an intrusion. In his absence the soldiers had spread in a wide circle around the fire, stationed well back and with a wide space between each two men. The half drunken savages were greatly impressed by the ceremony and kept back of the soldiers, although it would have been easy for them to have rushed through the loose circle. The drummer boy alone was sufficient to remind them of the mighty power of France.

Gainengoton and the two prisoners had halted in the circle of soldiers. Tugg squeezed Burnham's hand and whispered—

"Look behind you."

After a few moments Burnham carelessly gazed about and beheld six grim savages blocking any attempt to leave the circle. Burnham surrendered all hope of Tugg's escaping with the canoe and prepared himself to act the terrible rôle of executioner.

By the council fire was a medicine buffalo robe. On this was a long pipe brought from the far off Mississippi. The twelve men seated themselves and kept the blankets over their heads despite the heat of the night. All was silent as the half circle, gathered to decide Tugg's fate, waited for the elderly man to throw back his blanket and light the pipe and pass it.

The whole assemblage was startled by Gainengoton suddenly raising a hand and shouting:

"Let every man use his ears! A voice is calling us!"

This would have been a gross breach of etiquette unless there had been due warrant for the outcry. The entire gathering listened intently. To the east and beyond the fort came a faint cry. Eyes glistened and hands were clapped to lips. The cry was repeated again and again, coming more distinctly each time. At last it was understood and, with a mighty roar of rejoicing, red men and white faced to the east. The councillors, not having started to smoke, jumped to their feet and stared as eagerly as did the others.

"What new deviltry is this?" groaned Tugg.

"A WAR-PARTY returns with scalps," said Burnham. "The council will be put off."

Around the tip of the point bobbed a string of lights, torches held high in victorious canoes. The little fleet shot along toward the landing place. With one accord soldiers and Indians, officers and the two prisoners ran to the shore. From the first canoe a Frenchman stepped ashore. He waited for the other canoes to come up. Soldiers and savages crowded around him. He was Sieur de Montigny, who had left Rigaud's army to scout to the Hudson. He had taken with him twenty-five Abnaki and Iroquois of the Two Mountains.

De Noyan and the drummer passed through the mob. Montigny proudly reported:

"I bring six scalps taken outside of the fort at Saratoga, Monsieur le Commandante. I have promised my warriors they shall dance them immediately."

"You have done well, monsieur. France is grateful. The western Indians were about to hold a council, but they had not smoked and it can wait. The scalps shall be danced as soon as I have talked to the Ottawas and Potawatomis." He called for Doty to announce to the western tribes that the scalps would be danced before the council was held. After the interpreter had finished the Indians yelled their approval, and the crowd fell back from the shore to give the returned warriors room to land and form their circle.

The first savage to take his place carried a bloody skull on the end of a pole. Five others carried scalps, similarly elevated. Fully a dozen of the warriors were partly dressed in garments taken from their victims or from abandoned farmhouses. All the men had their faces painted red, and those who wore shirts had the shoulders of the garments painted red. The man who carried the skull wore a girdle of rattlesnake skins with rattles attached; and, as he commenced dancing, the sinister warning continually sounded. He danced alone at first and, in pantomime, portrayed a snake coiling and striking, and all the time exhorting his grandfather, the father of all snakes, not to be angry with him for wearing the empty skins. This dance aroused the wildest enthusiasm, and men who had refrained from brandy were now deliriously drunk from staring at the red skull and the dancer.

The others joined in, and the massed spectators swept backward to give more room. Burnham shook Tugg by the shoulder and whispered:

"Now! The canoe nearest the covered way. Don't try to take two. You'll be seen."

As the twelve men danced, the savage onlookers danced and worked themselves into a frenzy. Without shifting his gaze from the gruesome celebration, Gainengoton told Burnham:

"The western warriors will dance a fresh scalp tonight. Their blood is hot."

Burnham dared not turn his head to note how Tugg had fared. That he had not been observed was apparent by the absence of any alarm. But whether he had managed to clear the point or was in hiding near the fort, Burnham did not know.

The dancing and singing advanced along the point to the Ottawa and Potawatomi camp. Outside the skin shelters it was renewed with fresh enthusiasm, and a keg of brandy was opened. The drummer boy aided Doty in serving the liquor. After one ration had been distributed, Montigny called on his band to follow him to the fort and receive their scalp bounty. For, unlike the Iroquois in New York, they were not kept waiting when they made a kill. Burnham was delighted to discover no signs of Tugg's withdrawal being noticed. He was astounded to behold Jessraday peering into his face.

"You'll be killed—"

"I'll die when my times comes," interrupted Jessraday. "Dresser has started. I'll go now if you can start soon."

"Tell the Robson girl to play the pipes when the men gather before the council fire. Then be off."

Jessraday turned and withdrew from the light of the torches and the fire and vanished from sight without a single warrior's halting him. Gainengoton said—

"The man who was seen by a dead man riding is foolish to walk here alone tonight."

"The time he will die is fixed by the dead rider. Until then no man can hurt him. No warrior tried to stop him coming or leaving here," said Burnham.

In a voice of awe the chief continued:

"The warriors did not see him. Another man would not be safe to walk among them."

"They did not see him. His *orenda* hid him. The Red Bird saw him as his *orenda* is very strong."

This piece of praise was very pleasant in the chief's ears, and for several minutes he stared in haughty silence on those whose medicine was weaker than his. Then he said—

"Where is the little man who scalps himself?"

"He went on ahead."

"The Red Bird did not see him leave. His *orenda* is strong. He went up in the air and flew like a bird. He is not Gainengoton's prisoner. A chief does not watch another man's prisoner. My son did not run away when our eyes were blinded by the scalps and dancing."

"He does not run while wearing a chief's wampum. What will they do when they look for the little man and do not see him?"

Gainengoton indifferently replied:

"They can hunt for him. They will pass the club while their young warriors are hunting for him. If his *orenda* is very strong, the young men will be blind when they look at him."

They heard him in silence.

* * *

The confusion and excitement attending the return of the victorious war-band began to subside. The twelve men to compose the council, once muffled in blankets, slowly stalked to their places before the council fire. Their elderly leader seated himself by the robe and his companions arranged themselves in a semicircle on each side. Montigny's warriors became spectators, and were fiercely interested after learning a white prisoner's life was at stake. Burnham had so maneuvered that he and Gainengoton stood with their backs to the path he hoped to take. He had decided on the bold course and purposed crossing the point within a short distance of the fort.

The aged Ottawa parted the blanket a trifle and peered around at his companions and picked up the medicine-pipe, and then asked—

"Is the white man here?"

Torches were waved to give greater light. A man shouted that the prisoner was with Gainengoton. The chief advanced a pace and haughtily announced:

"Your prisoner is not with the Red Bird. He is not the Red Bird's prisoner. One white man is here. He wears a chief's wampum."

Cries of surprize soon gave way to yells of rage as a hurried investigation failed to reveal Tugg. Lieutenants Dumont and Herbin ran around the outer circle of soldiers to learn who had seen the man last. They learned nothing. Doty put the same question in various Indian tongues. None recalled seeing him after Sieur de Montigny landed.

Gainengoton suggested—

"He may be hiding in the fort."

A sergeant with a squad of soldiers hurried to search the fort.

De Noyan now spoke up, ordering Lieutenant Herbin:

"Take a dozen warriors and look along the shore. See if a canoe is missing. He must have slipped into a canoe and remained hidden until we drew away from the landing place. Send two men across to the mill. He may have paddled north. He may have landed on the other shore and taken to the woods." Then to council of Indians he loudly announced, "It would be better if you had given him to your father."

The ancient Ottawa picked up the pipe and lighted it, and the twelve men smoked.

Then the leader briefly outlined the matter to be voted upon. The white man had killed two men from the west. The club would be passed. If a man dropped it he voted for torture. If he passed it without dropping it, he voted to trade the white man to Onontio's son. What would have been a prolonged ceremony and made much of as possible, was gone through with as rapidly as red decorum would permit.

The leader picked up the black war-club and, with a dramatic gesture, dropped it on the ground, thereby voting for death. The next man did the same, and not once did the club pass without being dropped. With each vote the red spectators howled like wolves. When the leader formally announced that Tugg was to be burned to cover the bones of Two Deaths and the Black Wind there was much howling. Several optimistic warriors prepared a stake and collected suitable fuel. The majority, however, believed there would be time enough to gather wood after the missing prisoner was found.

As the council all stood before leaving the fire, the sobbing, wailing pathos of the pipes came from the camp near the old quarry. Instantly the mad scurrying about halted. Like one walking in his sleep, Gainengoton advanced slowly toward the music. To the savages it was the weeping of the wind-spirit among tops of the firs and pines, the moaning of a red mother over her dead boy, a red maid mourning her lover's death.

De Noyan and his officers also were drawn toward the camp, spellbound by the artistry of the player. When the last plaintive note was dying away, the soldiers cried for more.

"*Bis! Bis!* "shouted De Noyan, his cultural side responding hungrily to the efforts of the musician.

Then began a sprightly march that set every foot, white and red, to tingling. The savages were as quick as children to feel the sway of the rollicking strains, and whooped and danced and for the moment entirely forgot the escaped prisoner. In an irresistible mob they raced toward the camp where Hoped-For Robson was marching back and forth outside the cooking fires. Her eyes were set and her round cheeks were puffed tight. As she marched back and forth, the Indians pressed around her, but always giving ground so as not to stay her steps. Savages extended their hands to lightly touch her hair. The march changed to the loud defiance of a war song, and she turned toward the shore and walked in a wide circle as if to encircle the camp. Aroused to a red ecstasy, the Indians surged around her, but always taking care her path should not be blocked. The soldiers strolled in the wake of the long red train. The officers saw practically all the red allies following the girl as if some powerful sorcerer had so willed. Gainengoton, one of the rearmost, halted when the music abruptly ceased. He shook his head to clear his mind of vague images and mad ambitions. He stared blankly around him for a few moments. The white man he would have formally adopted as his son was gone.

A ferocious hate surged through the red mind. A prisoner reserved for adoption, did he run away, was doomed to all the torment the terrible anger of his captor could invent. Burnham's crime was even more heinous. He had broken his promise and had escaped while wearing a chief's wampum. No fate could be too awful for such as he.

The chief reached to the back of his belt to pull his ax, and opened his mouth to sound the hunting-call of his people and bring his Mohawks around him. He uttered no sound, however, but slowly held the ax up before him and stared at the string of wampum looped around the long iron head.

De Noyan, passing with a torch-bearer, halted and asked—

"What has my son found?"

Gainengoton replaced his ax and hung the wampum around his brawny neck and answered:

"He has found an honest man. He has found a man who could have walked without fear wherever men know a road-belt of the Iroquois, but who now walks with death behind him and on both sides of him because he is an honest man."

"Onontio's son has sleep in his head he does not understand," said the commandant.

Before enlightening him, Gainengoton lifted his voice in the hunting-call. From all sides men ran to him until he was surrounded by savage, expectant warriors. Lifting a hand to quiet their yowling he announced:

"A very brave man chooses death where he could have walked safely. The white man's name will not be called in a council. The Red Bird will have no new son. The white man runs away. But he returned a chief's wampum before going. His tongue is straight. He kept his promise. He is to be taken alive. He is a very brave man and will do us great honor by dying bravely by fire. He will be a long time dying. He will show our young men how a man should die. He must be run down and brought back even if the chase carries you to within an arrow-shot of Albany."

MONTIGNY, who had come up during this talk, hurriedly said:

"Send your warriors over the path you and Rigaud took when you burned the fort. My Micmacs even now are starting for the head of Lake Sacrement to find the Ottawas' prisoner. They will overtake your man if he went that way. I will send another canoe after them to say Gainengoton's man is to be taken alive if possible. One of the two bands will find him."

"He will be the prisoner of the men who capture him," reminded De Noyan. "If the Micmacs catch him they can trade him for many presents."

"My red brothers will not trade him for Onontio's presents," sternly cried Ganiengoton. "They will bring him to the Red Bird and shall be given a feast. Then they shall watch a brave man die. For three sleeps they will see him fight the fire. He is a brave man and will do us all a great honor. Onontio's presents can buy some other man. Ho! You men whose fathers left the ancient place of the flint to live at the Sault Saint Louis. You will go east of the lake as you went when we stuck the ax in the English fort."

And he waved his hand in dismissal and, like starved wolves after a moose, the French Mohawks raced to the shore and took to their canoes.

TAKING advantage of the savages' absorbtion in the bagpipe music, Burnham was able to fall back into the rocky ground southwest of the fort and to commence crossing the point within a pistol shot of the inland ramparts. The way was rough and the night was dark, and the borderer was desberate. He well knew what his fate would be if recaptured. At first, once outside the murky firelight, he raced along recklessly and, more than once, fell headlong. As the music grew fainter and there came no signs of pursuit, he slowed his pace and saved himself from many falls over the outcropping black rocks. And so promptly had he taken advantage of the opportunity offered by the pipes that when the Mohawks of the Sault raised their hunting-cry, he did not hear the sound of their voices. Holding a half-pound piece of rock in each hand, he groped his way to the waters of Wood Creek unopposed and, so far as he could discover, unpursued.

He knew he must be north of Tugg and the two canoes, provided Tugg had succeeded in escaping from the mill. He began following the shore, intent on gaining the outlet of Lake George or Sacrement, as the French called it. There was the chance Tugg was slow in leaving the mill, even if he were not detained there. And there was the strong possibility, if he left the mill, that he had been unable to secure a second canoe. Jessraday and Dresser had had ample time to cross the point, and Burnham assumed they were well above him.

He had stumbled along the edge of the water for nearly half a mile when he heard the welcome hail—

"Burnham?"

"Here! Which of you is it?"

"All of us. Jessraday talking. Come ahead and get in."

"Good land! Then Tugg managed to make it!"

"Aye, aye, my ferocious boy," croaked Tugg. "Snug and tight, and two bark boats. The two sentinels are drunk and asleep at the mill by now."

Burnham advanced and almost fell into a canoe. Jessraday steadied him and guided him to Tugg's birch. Finding a paddle, he explained:

"They'll be after us in several bands. They'll cover the creek through the Drowned Lands and also scour Lake George to the head. They'll come smartly, and the chase won't end until we're inside of Albany."

"Let'm come. They'll need to come faster'n the —— can snap his long tail," exulted Tugg.

Dresser, speaking for the first time, said: "We must find a snug place and hide till the chase is given up."

"Hide? From savages and papists?" indignantly cried Tugg.

"Hush!" warned Burnham. "A voice carries far on the water. My business won't let me hide overlong. But the rest of you can. 'Tis a pity we're unarmed."

"I managed to fetch my scythe along, thank heavens," softly exclaimed Dresser.

"I have a knife I got at the mill. I tried for a gun, but I'd spent so much time waiting for the soldiers to drink before I could get the second bark boat I didn't dare to risk it."

Burnham and Tugg led the way, keeping close to the west shore and paddling smartly, although the night was very thick. Dresser was for exercising more caution, but the borderer insisted his errand wouldn't wait and that they must abandon the canoes and hide in the rough, timbered country unless they could make good progress or at least the equivalent of that of their pursuers. Jessraday was indifferent. He believed his own fate was foreordained and that the time was near; that no amount of evasion could prolong his life, nor any accident shorten it. He worked as a man who has just so much time to live and is anxious to devote it to serving his friends.

The sluggish current offered but little resistance to their progress, and the wind, following them from the north, aided them much. The two canoes kept close together, Dresser and Jessraday depending on Burnham to pick the course. Burnham knew his one chance was to leave the creek at Ticonderoga Point and enter the outlet of Lake George far enough in advance of the enemy as not to be sighted. Once they were seen, they would be rapidly overhauled if they stuck to the birches. If seen and forced to abandon the birches, they would be pursued through a broken country, practically unarmed and without food. Could they gain the lake undiscovered, he proposed to land on the tangled west shore and hide until the chase had passed them. With the morning light coming early and with some ten miles to cover before entering the outlet, he prayed that the enemy were slow in taking to the water trail.

Had it been daylight, they could have seen nothing of the fort as they advanced close under the western shore. But on Mill Point a bright light suddenly glowed and grew larger rapidly. Soldiers or savages had reached the mill. Whether it was known a canoe was missing was a matter of guesswork. If the soldiers were not too drunk they had told how Tugg returned to them, bringing them rum. There was no sign of pursuit, but each of the four men felt it was racing after them with all the skill and strength red arms could give.

Tugg whispered—

"How long will they be in making this point?"

"All depends on how quick Montigny's Micmacs were to take to water. Those who were the first to hunt for you won't bother us much. But Gainengoton will never forgive me. I fear his Mohawks more than all the others put together. Don't talk."

They were more than half way to Ticonderoga Point when they heard the first hostile sound—a thin, quavering cry, like the scream of a panther far off in deep woods.

"Sounds like old Sathan," mumbled Dresser as the nose of his canoe lapped Burnham's.

"One of their scouts signaling his position. Some canoe in advance of the others. Doesn't want to be shot at by mistake. Don't talk."

IT WAS past midnight when Burnham slowed his stroke and waited for the others to come up abreast. It was very dark and the woods and rocks made it impossible for three of the fugitives to discern where the water ended and the shores began. Burnham changed his course and slowly paddled into what appeared to be a solid wall of ebony. Tugg fumed and remonstrated under his breath and muttered something about reefs and breakers. Burnham ordered him to be silent and cautiously kept on. The black wall receded as they advanced. As the first gray light permitted them to make out elevated skylines, Burnham announced:

"We've rounded the point. We must hide before we're seen. We'll land here on the right."

His friends were for pushing on, now they could see. He reminded them it would be fatal to be discovered when their arms were tired.

"It will be a long chase."

He selected a place where the timber afforded excellent cover, and proceeded to supervise the landing so that no traces would be left. After Jessraday and Dresser had gained the shore and had hidden their birch behind a thick bush growth close to the water, they returned and steadied Burnham's canoe against a flat rock. Burnham landed and picked up Tugg as if he were a child and carried him up the bank. Then the canoe was brought up and concealed with the first.

As a further safeguard, for they appreciated the savages' quickness in detecting signs invisible to ordinary eyes, they carefully picked their way along the shore some distance above the canoes. Here Jessraday halted while Burnham led Dresser and Tugg inland a short distance and advised them to get some sleep.

It lacked more than an hour to sunrise when Burnham rejoined Jessraday and settled down to watch. Mist was leaving the water. Like pale smoke it responded to the early light. Bird life became active and muskrats began their search for food. Like an apparition, a long birch glided by the point below the hiding place of the fugitives. It was filled with savages. The two men held their breaths, then sighed in relief as it continued up Wood Creek instead of turning to the west. Another and another birch took the same route. The man in the stern of the hindmost canoe ceased paddling to stare up the outlet. His face was masked with white and green diamond shapes. Despite the paint, Burnham recognized him as Gainengoton, and the fear he felt made him believe he understood Jessraday's terror when the dream-rider pursued.

When the last canoe had disappeared up the creek, Burnham fervently whispered—

"Thank God, that man isn't taking this course!'

"It's foolish to stay here now they're gone. Let's take to the water and hurry up to the lake."

"No. Others are coming. They'll come this way. If they saw us they would run us down. Dresser and Tugg can't run as fast as we can nor paddle as fast."

Inside of ten minutes another long canoe, decorated with porcupine quills and scalps, shot into view. This unhesitatingly swerved into the outlet. From the unusually long hair of the paddlers Burnham knew them to be Micmacs even before they drew near. The first canoe kept along the north shore. A second kept close to the south shore. Each shore was scanned closely by eyes that would be quick to note a wet spot on the side of a rock or a broken twig floating in the sluggish current. A third canoe rounded the point and kept along the north shore. As this one drew abreast of the fugitives' position, one savage ceased paddling and glared at their hiding place. Burnham almost believed that by some miracle of vision the man was beholding him. But the man held the same tense pose after he had passed their position. They watched the three birches pass up the outlet and disappear around a bend. After waiting fifteen or twenty minutes they aroused Dresser and Tugg and held a council.

Jessraday briefly told of the two bands and said:

"We have no food. Unless we have a long lead we're safer traveling behind than ahead of them. I'm for pushing on now."

"If we could kill some game I'd say to stick here till they quit looking for us," said Dresser. "They'd never suspect we'd halt so close to Crown Point."

"I'm hungry. I'll fight any red —— in America for a chunk of meat," growled Tugg.

Burnham prophesied:

"The Mohawks will hurry up Wood creek to East Bay. Part, if not all of them will cut through to old Fort Anne. The Micmacs will hasten to the head of the lake and make sure we haven't reached it ahead of them. Leaving scouts there, the others will turn back and scour the islands and shores for signs of us. Some of Gainengoton's men may cross to join the Micmacs. We're stronger today than we'll be tomorrow unless we can eat. We must make the head of the lake as quickly as possible, but to hurry on without food means exhaustion and capture. We must do almost all of our traveling by night. We must wait for night before trying to break through their line at the head of the lake. One of us must get through with De Noyan's talk about the French fleet. I'm for going ahead now. I'm risking it, as I believe there are no more canoes coming after us."

His companions agreed the risk was worth taking. He reconnoitered both shores of the outlet for some minutes before giving the word for his companions to help with the canoes. The same care in embarking was exercised as was taken in landing. In taking the lead this time Burnham announced he would keep some distance ahead and that if he waved his hand the second canoe was to land at once, but with great care, as his signal would mean he had sighted the enemy. When he lifted both hands the canoe was to join him as speedily as possible.

He and Tugg set off, racing ahead smartly until they reached a bend, when they would slow down and spy out the channel beyond. These approaches to bends and small points were filled with thrills and forebodings, as both paddlers realized the possibility of a Micmac canoe lying in wait for them. Tugg handled a paddle well for one used to the deep seas, and seemed to tire none, although he grumbled almost continually.

By midday they came to a stream* that flowed into the outlet from the west. Here they halted and surveyed the several miles of narrow waterway that led into the lake proper. All were weary from exertion and loss of sleep. The sweat was a beaded covering on Dresser's bald head, and his lips looked blue. Finally, Burnham turned his birch and entered the little tributary.

"Thought we was going on," mumbled Dresser. "What an old fool I was to go trapseying after you! I was happy and had something—not much, but something—to eat in North Yarmouth."

"We'll rest," comforted Burnham. "And we must get food."

He led the way a few rods up the creek and, satisfied an enemy would have to penetrate the stream to find them, he contented himself with drawing the canoes under some overhanging limbs. Leaving Dresser to rest and Jessraday to keep him company, he took Tugg back to the mouth of the creek and posted him a thicket, warning him not to fall asleep or stray.

"What'll you be doing, my heartsome boy?" asked Tugg, as Burnham turned to leave him.

"I'll see if I can knock over some small game with a club or a rock."

"I could eat a dead fish!" sighed Tugg.

PICKING up a handful of rocks, Burnham struck up the right hand bank of the creek. Bear signs were plentiful, and he passed several trees where the wisps of hair clinging to the bark proclaimed them to be rubbing-posts for bruin. Although the creatures were thick in the woods, the borderer saw none. His interest was confined to small game, and had he possessed a gun he would not have dared fire it. He had hoped to find some pigeons, but they were on the wing. At night the timber would be noisy enough with their cooing.

Circling around Dresser and Jessraday, Burnham followed the stream for a fourth of a mile without any success. He turned to go back, gloomily wondering how and when he might be able to procure food, when a slight noise brought him to a standstill. To his great joy, a bronze-feathered cock turkey came into view. Clutching his rocks, the borderer stood motionless and glared hungrily through his half-closed lids. The majestic bird, weighing close to forty pounds, leisurely advanced. If the cock saw the man, he mistook him for a stump. It approached within ten feet of the borderer, who rapidly hurled the two pieces of rock. The first missed; the second knocked the turkey off its feet. Before the victim could give a sign of life Burnham was upon him and had twisted the neck.

Seating himself, he forthwith plucked and dressed his kill. With his optimism restored by this piece of good luck, he returned to Dresser and Jessraday and found them both asleep. Leaving the bird, he started to join Tugg and had covered half the distance when he heard hurried steps approaching. He treed himself and waited. Tugg soon came into view, running awkwardly. He was carrying his knife in one hand and a sharp-pointed six-foot pole in the other.

Burnham stepped into view and whispered—

"Why are you running?"

"Boat-load of the heathen passed me, making for up the lake. Never see such fiercely painted ——! They'd joggle the nerves of even Ned Teach. I could 'a' sent one to his flaming master with a cast of this stout spear. Good's a pike. I'll make some more. We can spear fish in the shallows."

"Wake the men and stay with them!"

And Burnham was running rapidly to the mouth of the creek. He endeavored to gain a glimpse of the canoe. He could not see more than a few rods to the north as a wood bend cut off his view. He was about to follow along the shore until he could get a good view of the lake, but was halted by nothing more significant than several bits of freshly cut bark at the edge of the water. He swept his gaze out on the sluggish current, and was horrified to behold more shavings floating slowly down stream.

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*Trout Creek.

In fashioning his spear with his French knife, Tugg had carelessly permitted some of the shavings to fall into the creek. The borderer believed his own and his companions' fate pivoted upon an extremely fine point of time. Had the shavings had time to float out from the creek to attract the attention of the Indians? Burnham believed they had, for Tugg had not lingered to finish his spear after seeing the enemy. Inwardly cursing the sea-robber, for he believed that even the outcome of the war might be decided by those few shavings, Burnham ran as noiselessly as possible, and startled his companions by savagely announcing:

"I think they'll be on us in a short time. They've rounded the bend as if making up the lake. I look for them to come back. Tugg let shavings float down stream. They must have seen them."

"No, sir! Not by a—— sight, my lad!" cried Tugg. "See the shavings? I could almost laugh. Why, when that bark boat passed within a few feet of me not a head was turned in my direction. Every head was held high, every eye was staring straight toward the lake. That's as much eyesight as the red papists had!"

"That settles it!" groaned Dresser as he rapidly locked the scythe blade into the crooked handle. "If they hadn't seen the shavings they'd been wondering if any one was hiding up here. Seeing 'em, they knew we was here and they didn't want any of us to suspect what they knew. It's only a question of minutes before they come back to stick an ax into our heads."

Tugg shook his spear and growled:

"There's only five. I'll make some more of these spears and we'll kill all of 'em. No greasy, painted savage can push Old Ben off a plank. They was as naked as monkeys."

Catching up the turkey Burnham directed:

"Cross to the other side. If we have to run for it, it must be toward the south. Perhaps one of us can get through. If they find our canoes and where I dressed the bird, they may think we're on this side."

He ignored Tugg's profane protests and slung him over his shoulder and carried him across. Dresser and Jessraday used the utmost care in crossing, and the latter said:

"I'd feel much better if one of us was down at the mouth of the creek, watching for their canoe. Before running away from our canoe why not find out if they are coming?"

"Draw back to the west a quarter of a mile and hide. I'll go and look for them," said Burnham.

He returned to the mouth of the creek, but found no signs of the enemy. He was surprized and somewhat puzzled. It was not natural for men in the birch to pass Tugg's hiding place with averted faces. It did not seem possible the shavings had escaped their notice.

"They know some one is up this creek. They'll come back. They won't wait till night and give us a chance to slip away. Then why don't they come?" he mused as he stared out on the empty water.

He faced to the north, where the wooded bend in the foreground blocked his view, and wondered how he could have been so stupid when the best course for the Indians to pursue was so obvious.

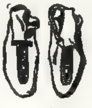
"Fool and double fool!" he muttered as he worked away from the shore and hastened to rejoin his companions.

For now he was positive the Indians had landed above the bend and would come through the growth to make the attack.

Sacrificing caution for speed, for the Indians either were far away or making through the timber, he ran as rapidly as the growth permitted. Savage shouts of triumph broke the silence.

"—— your painted hide!" Tugg yelled a short distance ahead.

"Keep your backs to the tree!" roared Dresser's voice.



AS BURNHAM burst on to the scene he beheld Tugg and Dresser with their backs to a big maple. Jessraday, being similarly situated on the opposite side of the tree, was not in sight. A naked Micmac lay on the ground with Tugg's spear through his throat. Four warriors were dancing around the tree, shrieking loudly and trying to secure an opening. None had guns.

Burnham shouted encouragement. The Indian facing Dresser wheeled about. Dresser jumped away from the tree and mowed him off his feet. The crippled man sounded an ear-splitting screech and dropped knife and ax and attempted to drag himself away. He was fast bleeding to death, but as Burnham snatched up the ax and knife, he paused long enough to strike the ax into the red neck.

As this tragedy was being enacted, Tugg shouted and ducked under a giant's arm and stabbed him in the side. The warrior did not seem to sense the bite of the small blade, but held the pirate's head under one arm and drew back his knife. Burnham leaped to prevent the blow, knowing he was too late. An Indian leaped on his back. Burnham threw him over his head and the two clinched. He caught a glimpse of Tugg on the ground beside his assailant, stabbing his man repeatedly. Close by were Jessraday and a warrior locked in each other's arms. They were motionless. It was this couple rolling spasmodically and striking against the heels of the big man in the act of stabbing Tugg that gave the latter another chance for his life.

Burnham shouted for Dresser to help Tugg and Jessraday. The borderer had dropped his ax and knife and held his man by the wrists. They fell and started to rise. The Indian, gripping a knife in the left hand, lunged forward. Burnham rested on one knee and held his adversary's knife-hand away and, pulling on the other wrist, dragged the man toward him until the head and neck rested on the raised knee. Releasing the man's right hand, Burnham violently pushed his palm against the red chin, forcing the head back. Writhing convulsively and attempting to bridge his body by coming up on his heels, the man would have flung himself aside had not Burnham quickly caught the wrist again and straightened him out in the original position. Burnham roared like a mad bull and, once more releasing the empty hand, raised his left fist. Before the man could slip from the trap he struck the savage's head a mighty blow, snapping it back over his knee and breaking the neck.

"Oh, my ——!" moaned Tugg.

Burnham staggered to his feet and glared wildly about for more foes. Dresser was kneeling beside the quiescent forms of Jessraday and his red foe. Tugg was leaning against a tree, panting for breath.

"Is he dead?" asked Burnham as he joined Dresser.

"They stabbed each other mortally," groaned Dresser.

In the space of ten minutes six men had died there in the close woods. Had the Micmacs been armed with guns the three men would have been slaughtered before Burnham could have reached the scene. For a minute the survivors stared at each other and the shambles. Tugg was the first to speak, and he panted:

"The dead man on the horse came for our friend. Ned Teach, are you seeing this? What a sight!"

Dresser pulled Jessraday clear of his victim and slayer. The Indian's dead hand still clutched the knife. Jessraday, unarmed, had gripped the wrist but had not been able to save himself from several murderous wounds in the side. In a last supreme effort, aided perhaps by the savage's belief the fight was won, he had forced the blade into the red throat. And one or both were dead when the last revolution of their locked bodies knocked the feet from under the savage about to kill Tugg.

Burnham cleared his wits and directed:

"Tugg, help me dig a grave for our poor friend. Dresser, look about and see if they had any guns."

DRESSER scouted a short distance and found two guns, powder-horns and bullet-pouches at the foot of a tree. It was apparent that the Indians, hunting for four escaped prisoners, had thought to capture three without alarming the absent man. Had Burnham been present, the guns would have disposed of two and the five men would soon have captured or killed the other two.

Dresser brought in the muskets and helped to carefully cover the grave. Tugg boldly cried:

"We have guns. I'm so weak I can't keep my legs under me. Let's roast that turkey and eat."

"We'll paddle around the next bend, where these men must have left their canoe. Then we'll eat," said Burnham.

They took the scalps and belt weapons and left the Indians where they had fallen and embarked in one of their canoes. After examining the outlet to the east and south and, discovering no signs of the enemy, they left the creek and kept close to the west shore until they came to the bend. Here Burnham landed and crossed to the south side and soon returned and said it was safe to paddle around.

They soon found the long Micmac canoe. In the prow was several medicine-bags, a quantity of dried meat, a small kettle and two bows and as many quivers of war-arrows. They built a small fire of dry fuel and risked broiling the turkey. They made a hearty meal of this, saving the corn and dried meat against the time when it would not be safe to light even a small fire. Tugg wished to exchange canoes, but his companions refused. They had left one canoe in the creek. To leave another in place of the long birch would show the enemy they had started up the lake. For the same reason Burnham decided not to take the kettle. The borderer took one of the bows and a quiver, leaving the other, as neither of his friends knew how to use such a weapon. Dresser announced:

"I can't move a bit farther till I'm rested. I guess I feel my years. You two keep on and I'll shift to the woods."

"We'll stick together until we've reached the head of the lake," ruled Burnham. "You'd die of starvation or exhaustion in very few days if you took to the woods. Wait for me here."

He moved inland to a rise of land from which he could examine the narrow island-dotted lake. He saw nothing of the canoes that had passed them near Ticonderoga Point. Returning to his friends, he told them:

"We must rest, but we can't chance it here. We'll keep close to the shore for a mile or so, and then land at a likely spot and wait until night. Poor Jessraday!"

Tugg was for taking the medicine-bags, but Burnham ordered him not to touch them.

"The savages will say their friends would have killed us if they had taken their medicine along. I don't believe in such stuff, but the guns are good enough medicine for us."

They followed the shore for two miles before Burnham was willing to land. The spot he selected was a thick fringe of timber extending from the water back a short distance to a bare and precipitous rock. The canoe was concealed close to the water behind a fallen tree. Burnham told his companions to retire to the foot of the steep rock and sleep while he stood watch at the edge of the water. After four hours he aroused Tugg and warned him to do nothing that would attract the Indians' attention and impressed upon him that he must think of the savages as having the gaze of eagles and the woodcraft and cunning of panthers. Tugg had learned his lesson, one that had cost the life of Jessraday.

Burnham slept until dusk was blurring the shores and the waters. Dresser urged—

"Nothing to stop us staying here till they git tired of hunting."

"Two reasons why we must push on. Our news must reach the Hudson. Once they find the dead Micmacs, they'll commence a close search up this shore. Gainengoton's Mohawks will be warned and will hurry to the head of the lake to stop us."

They made their supper of cold turkey, and then put their canoe in the water and embarked. They worked south until midnight when a dancing speck of light behind them drove them to the shore, where they placed the canoe behind some bushes and waited. The light grew larger; a torch in a canoe. One of the paddlers was dolefully singing. After the birch had passed their position Burnham said:

"They've found the dead men. They're singing a death-song. The torch is to attract attention of the band up the lake. We'll follow them."

"Good land! Let's call it a day's work!" protested Dresser.

"It's a good time to gain more ground."

Always keeping near the shore and with the torch to guide them they pressed on more confidently. When the first gray light of the new day began to reveal the eastern skyline, the canoe was hidden on the tip of a big point,* and Tugg was placed on guard. At sunrise Dresser was aroused to stand watch until midday. Burnham woke up and they ate dried meat and the last of the corn. Tugg reported two canoes coming down the lake at a fast pace. Each held five men and, from their swift paddling, it was plain the warriors were impatient to make some objective.

Dresser explained it, saying:

"Canoe with the torch found the dead Micmacs. Now it's found the rest of the heathens. They're hurrying back to search the woods for us. They found our canoe in the creek and think we've taken to the bush. When they left the fort it wa'n't known two canoes were missing from the mill."

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*Sabbath Day Point

"Three canoes are still between us and the head of the lake," reminded Burnham. "Less'n twenty miles for us to make. We'll push on tonight as far as we can."

Dresser was eager to travel afoot. Tugg, fearful of the wilderness, was vehement for sticking to the canoe. Burnham had only one thought, that of food. Taking the bow and several arrows, he scouted inland. He saw no small game and was becoming discouraged when some pigeons lighted in the growth, loading the trees until some of the weak or dead branches broke. Placing the bow and arrows aside he found a piece of root and had no trouble in knocking a dozen pigeons from their roost. He dressed these on the spot. When he returned to his companions, they had nothing new to report. Leaving them, he scouted to the south side of the point and studied the lake. He saw nothing of the Micmacs, although he knew they might be on any of the numerous islands.

The sun was behind the forest when he rejoined his comrades. Dresser insisted:

"I've been chewing on this matter. I've decided the bloody rascals think it's likely we left that creek and have worked up this way. That's why three canoes stay up here. I'm mortal keen to take to the timber."

"We'll do ten miles more and then foot it," surrendered Burnham.

AFTER the night settled down, Dresser went inland and made a small fire behind a thicket of firs and broiled the pigeons while his friends kept watch. They took to water immediately after eating and rounded the point in almost stygian darkness. Their progress was slow and at times Burnham was puzzled to know if he were keeping to the mainland or skirting an island. Clouds hid the stars, and Tugg was hopelessly confused. Heavy clouds delayed the morning light, and they paddled for six hours before the darkness thinned enough for Burnham to look for landmarks. They were at the tip of a point that contained a hill which he called Tongue Mountain. To save the journey around the head of the bay, Burnham risked discovery by heading across the foot.

"Thank the lord we can stretch our legs," groaned Dresser as he limped ashore.

"Light abaft!" growled Tugg.

A bright blaze was burning on an island off the point.

"One of their sentinels has seen us or something and is signaling to the rest of the band," said Burnham. "Slash the canoe and fill it with rocks and sink it. Throw that scythe away. We've got to run for it before we can rest."

The canoe was soon under water, but Dresser refused to part with the scythe. He had imperiled his chances of escaping from the prisoners' camp when he persisted in carrying the awkward weapon across the point. Burnham remained at the edge of the water, watching for further signs of the enemy. No canoe put off from the island, but as the light increased he saw a tall pillar of smoke climbing high in the south, and he knew that all the Micmacs within sight of it would soon be hurrying to be in at the death.

"The fire means we've been seen. Probably one man left there as a lookout. We'll need all the start we can get."

And he started inland.

Now came travail for Tugg. The country was rough and thickly timbered. The foothills of the Adirondacks took root near the west shore. Windfalls and bog-holes made traveling slow and wearisome. Burnham attempted to cheer his companions by saying they would find easier footing once they struck into the old Indian path running north and south. Two miles of the rough way were covered before they came to the trail, a narrow path that wound in and out. Burnham went ahead with Dresser bringing up the rear. The day began intensely close and hot, and in the growth the humid heat was almost unbearable. Since they were unable to see ahead beyond a short distance, there was an excellent opportunity for the imagination to people every thicket with lurking savages.

Tugg grunted in dismay as a low rumbling swept through the forest.

"Thunder," said Burnham. "Storm coming."

And he threw away the bow and arrows.

"Hat of the ——! Must we go through another of those twisters?" groaned Tugg.

"It'll hold the Indians back. I'd rather be hit by a tree than by an ax."

The thunder increased in ferocity and was duplicated by many echoes. A lurid light penetrated the forest crown at times. The lightning bolts began to get the range, and the rumbling and bellowing was replaced by staccato detonations. Stout trees were shivered. The wind began to secure a death-hold on the timber, and monarchs that were reigning when Columbus blundered upon the continent thundered to the forest floor, flattening the lesser growth beneath them.

"Let's stop and wait!" cried Dresser, making himself heard with much difficulty.

"Wait? ——!" cried Burnham. "What good to be killed while standing still?"

WITH death ahead and behind and on each side, their only consolation was the knowledge that the storm, riddling the forest and carpeting its floor with broken branches and splintered boles, effectually concealed all traces of their passing. The forest roof became porous and the rain limited the vision to a rod or two. Burnham's feet easily followed the deeply worn trail even when the bush growth, waist and shoulder high, hid it. The others toiled after him, the three now keeping close together. For two hours they followed the trail before the storm left them to make a general assault on the western mountains.

Burnham halted and wiped the rain and sweat from his face and announced—

"We must be within ten miles of the head of the lake."

"In——'s mercy, push on!" hoarsely cried Dresser. "If we don't find an opening, my head's going to snap."

"Clap on all sail," panted Tugg. "This would take the heart out of Ned Teach."

Straggling patches of sunlight found the sodden forest floor. Pools of water were frequent. The thunder was succeeded by the hum of insect life. It was a sorry place for taking one's rest. Burnham continued the flight. After another hour they came to an opening where moss-covered rocks offered a release from the steaming ground. Burnham was weary. His companions were nearly exhausted. Tugg painfully climbed a boulder and threw himself down on a cushion of moss and defied:

"Come savage, come——! I'll anchor here."

Burnham and Dresser followed his example, and the borderer found himself on guard alone. Lying on his back and staring up at the blue sky he saw the sun complete three hours of its journey, and then was talking with his sister and the Robson girl. He would have slept until night had not Tugg awoke after six hours of slumber. The sun was past the meridian. The old sea-robber, refreshed by his rest, returned to fearing the pursuit. In desperate haste he aroused Burnham.

Burnham, his pleasant dreams suddenly interrupted, glanced at the sun and kicked Dresser's foot. The old man popped to an upright position, ready to repel an assault. He, too, had been dreaming of his friends in North Yarmouth. Clearing his mind, he peevishly complained:

"Why disturb me? We can't do nothing more till nightfall."

"We must get away from this opening and the trail," ruled Burnham. "The storm has held them back, but by this time they must be pressing us hard. We'll soon strike to the southwest and leave the lake behind us. I do pray that the signal fire has called all the Indians away from the head of the lake."

Again he led the way and, with fear of capture, stimulating limbs refreshed by sleep, the three advanced at a trot. They waded through a creek, bankful after the rain and Burnham slipped on a stone and dropped the gun he was carrying. He did not attempt to regain it, as he knew the fight was at their heels. They came to another small opening and were running across it when a demonical howl close behind them sent them scurrying to trees.

Tugg screamed:

"By——, we're boarded! Ned Teach, stand by and match this!"

His exclamation was answered by triumphant yells. Dresser stood with his left side to a big hole so as to have free play for his scythe. A few feet from him Burnham was posted. On the latter's left Tugg was crouching, his sleeves rolled high, a knife in his left hand, his right clutching the remaining musket. He had thrown aside his wig. The savages came on, whooping and howling, confident the chase was ended. Tugg defiantly bellowed:

" 'Each man to his gun, for the work must be done, with cutlas, sword or pistol.' "

Burnham glared at the spot where the trail left the growth and held his ax half raised. The howling suddenly ceased. A copper-colored hand, clutching a French tomahawk, appeared above a bush; then a grotesquely painted visage came into view. The borderer jerked back his arm and made a long cast. The savage did not discover his peril until the revolving ax was well on its flight. He made a convulsive effort to dodge but was too late, and what had been an eccentric interlacing of white and red lines became a ghastly smear as the blade struck squarely between the eyes. Then did Burnham fill his lungs and shout. The dead warrior fell forward, his shaved head and scalp-lock protruding from the bushes. Behind rose fearful screams of rage.

"Never let them torture me, my bold lad!" cried Tugg.

"We'll all be killed in our tracks," was the hoarse reply.

"If they get me they'll earn me," snarled Dresser as he nervously worked the scythe back and forth.

The howling suddenly ceased. Burnham could trace the movements of the enemy by the gentle agitation of the bushes on both sides of the trail.

"They're coming!" he warned.

TUGG snatched up a musket and fired, but did no damage. With an explosive shout six Micmacs, as naked as dogs, leaped from cover and charged the three trees. Tugg jumped like a venomous spider and threw his legs and arms about a man whose hair fell well below the waist, and the two crashed to the ground. Dresser leaped from his tree and hooked his scythe around a warrior's leg. To add to the confusion, a shout sounded in the growth, south of the opening. The Micmacs at first were intent on taking the fugitives alive, and they did not attempt to use weapons until they heard the alien shouting. Burnham dashed his fist into a warrior's face and attacked another with his knife and yelled the war-cry of the pagan Mohawks of the Long House.

The savage, felled by the borderer's fist, rolled to one side and got to his feet and started to run away as there came the scuffling of running feet through the growth. Dresser was knocked down by the handle of a hurriedly flung ax and found himself lying across the body of the man he had mortally wounded. This warrior squirmed from under him and attempted to crawl away, although he was fast bleeding to death from a severed artery in his thigh. Burnham was still wrestling with his man, and making hard work of it because the naked body was covered with a thick coating of grease, when the small scout-band of Mohawks rushed on the scene.

A gun exploded, and the hindmost of the fleeing Micmacs pitched on his face, grunting and coughing. A red hand darted over Burnham's shoulder and cut the throat of his adversary. Blinded by blood, Burnham fell back. Then he could see the clearing was empty except for four dead Micmacs and one Mohawk of the Long House. This warrior was standing with his back to the borderer and listening eagerly to the whooping of his men as they chased the two Micmacs.

"You robbed me of a scalp!" panted Burnham. The Indian wheeled about and Burnham cried, "Gingego! You're welcome to the hair!"

"That little man will soon be a ghost," quietly said the chief, and he pointed to Tugg.

Dresser came limping up and whispering—"Guess he's done for, Burnham."

Burnham ran to Tugg and found him on the point of expiring from several savage knife wounds. But he had killed his man. In a faint voice he said:

"Don't tell her, my roaring lad—the Robson girl. Don't tell her I was ever that."

"She shall never know from me you were a pirate," promised Burnham, knowing the girl from the first had possessed the history of the man.

"I don't mean that, my roaring boy," weakly mumbled Tugg. "Don't let her know I was a public executioner. Aye, aye, Ned Teach. I'm coming. But with no booty."

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

HOPED-FOR BURNHAM leaned against her husband's shoulder as he sat in the doorway of their Hoosac Valley cabin and waited for him to divulge the contents of the message he was holding in his hands. The man who brought it was riding swiftly down the valley road, and yet her husband did not speak.

"Well?" she asked, a little anxiously.

He lifted his head and reached up and placed his big hand over hers.

"The writing is from Colonel William Johnson. He needs me. He sends for me. He asks me to command a company of riflemen. The first news is true. Braddock and all his army have been killed. Johnson moves at once against Ticonderoga. I must go, Hope."

"I've been expecting it. I've been fearing it," she softly told him.

"You must go to Nance in Albany. We will start as soon as you are ready. Get the children."

"Won't this fighting ever end?" she asked, her small face working convulsively for a moment. Without waiting for him to answer she continued, "What good does it all do? So many killed at Louisburg in the last war! And England gave Louisburg back to the French. So many killed on the borders! Must our two boys grow up and take your place and go away to be killed?"

"I'll not be killed. I'll come back. This will be the last war against the French in North America. And we'll lick them so hard this time there'll be no giving back of what we capture."

"Well, Phil, I've got to bear it. I'll thank God if this is the last war. I'll thank God all my life if our boys can plow and plant and never have to go fighting."

"There'll be another war, some time," he told her.

"Then there is no end!" she despairingly cried. "You say this will be the last war. Almost in the same breath you tell me we are raising children to fight against the French. And our king will hand back what they die to win!"

"This is the last war against the French in America, I tell you, sweetheart."

"But you say another war is coming?"

He looked up into her sober eyes and whispered:

"Against England. I'm off for the last time to fight for a crown that cares so little what happens to us over here in the woods. There are thousands who feel as I do. We could have whipped France out of all notion of ever wanting to fight us again in the last war. But Shirley was muzzled. Now the crown sends over a man to lead an army against a handful of French and Indians and, by ——, he gets himself killed and most of his army! Think of it! The sorry shame and misery of it! Young George Washington could have won that fight with two hundred riflemen, and an army is murdered! Sweetheart, I'm off for the last time to fight for England and have her give back what we win. In the next war we'll hold what we win, and God send that our two youngsters shall have more peace and comfort than you and I have had. But, sweetheart, they never can have more of happiness and true love. Blow on the pipes and call them in."

Two hours later Hoped-For Burnham, mounted on a horse with the younger boy before her, rode down the Hoosac Valley road. Her husband walked beside her with the easy stride of the forest-runner. He was trailing a new kind of a gun, one made in Pennsylvania by a man named Deckard. The valley was safe, yet from habit he swung his gaze from side to side, noting the flight of birds and the scolding of squirrels. On a second horse with a bag of personal belongings including the bagpipes, rode the older son. He carried a bow in his hand and had a quiver of arrows over his shoulder, and his eyes darted from side to side in imitation of his father's habitual suspicion.

"You'll be careful? You'll always remember I am waiting for you to come back? You'll take no unnecessary risks?"

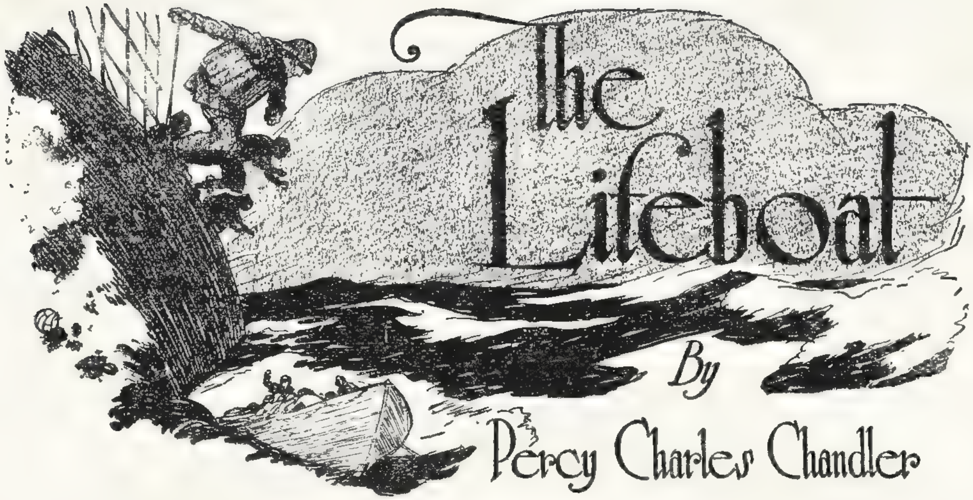
"I will be careful. I shall always remember. I shall always be seeing your dear face, sweetheart.

"I shall pray for your safety. I shall pray I never have to wait for my boys to come back."

"They will be too young when the next and last war comes, I hope."

"It will be heaven when there are no more wars. No more horrors. No more fear of going to sleep nights. Yes, that will be heaven. Remember, I shall be waiting for you to come back."

"I shall come back. Your dear love will bring me back all safe. And this time we'll hold what we win, sweetheart."



The Lifeboat

By

Percy Charles Chandler

Author of "The Bullfight," "The Cableman," etc.

DAY after day Varley trudged the highways and byways of Penwith in a state of feverish energy, and with the manner of a man intent on escaping some imminent specter at his elbow. He frequently muttered to himself with ugly gnawing motions of his sensitive mouth; and having been seen thus one day, and the matter spread abroad, the good country people of Penwith thereafter avoided the "Lunnoner" as a man *craazed*, or worse.

Varley was very thin and yellow when he arrived at Trevorder, the four-roomed granite cottage he had rented above Whitesand Bay. So much so that Mrs. Trembath, his housekeeper, despaired of him for a while. Mrs. Trembath appeared at Trevorder at seven o'clock in the morning, and in all weathers, like a good Cornishwoman. There she took possession of the kitchen, and cooked such satisfying meals of mutton and lamb, such luscious rolled ribs of beef with new potatoes and Brussels sprouts, that even Varley's appetite was tempted. He had lived so many years in the enervating tropics, and malaria and dyspepsia had taken such a hold of him, that he had almost forgotten how to eat.

When, one day after a particularly long walk and a bracing swim at Penanwell, he returned to the cottage and heard himself shouting for a third helping of strawberries and cream, he could scarcely credit the evidence of his own voice. A joyful Mrs. Trembath hurried in with a fresh supply; and Varley always counts the return of his health from that moment. In his youth he had been a famous oarsman and a Rugby blue, and the greatest sorrow of his life—except one—was that he had been compelled by force of circumstances to forego those pleasures of sport that had been the chief delight of his life.

Varley had been in Cornwall three months when he came face to face with that other and greatest sorrow again. For the owner of a tender conscience there is probably no more intense mental affliction than remorse for a great wrong done. And there is no more irretrievable wrong than the killing of a fellow-being.

Trevorder lies off the main road. The coastal high-road from Penzance that, curving a serpentine coil with that bold circle of the last land in England south and west to Land's End, and perceiving the futility of continuing into the heaving Atlantic beyond, doubles back to north and east and returns into the land that it seemed about to depart from. Where the road turns from south to north, along the nail of England's big toe jutting into the Atlantic, as it were, there lies Trevorder, a bare mile from the twin villages of Sennen Cove and Sennen Churchtown.

It was just after sunset when Varley heard the clang of the iron gate that leads off that same high road. The road was not so far away, only a matter of fifty yards;

but Trevorder, standing in the shadow of a tor, with a hilly slope of shaggy heath and granite extending down to the road—Trevorder seemed a world away from any road, from any civilization. Mrs. Trembath had left for her humble abode in Sennen Churchtown. Varley was alone, seated before the door of his cottage and sending a great fragrance of tobacco smoke into the crisp night air, when the sound of the gate startled him from his musing. He peered into the night below his feet, but could see nothing. A few seconds later he made out the figure of a man ascending the winding path. He sat back waiting and wondering. In another moment the man stood before him. His attitude was one of weariness and utter dejection. Varley swung open the door at his side so that the light from the parlor fell on the stranger.

"Well?" he asked.

In that moment the stranger looked up. He was a negro. Varley stifled an exclamation of surprize, a surprize that was not far removed from fear. One would as soon expect to meet a Polar bear in Piccadilly as a negro in Penwith.

"*Que busca usted aqui?*" demanded Varley, and he shrank perceptibly from the stranger. His voice trembled, and his right hand clutched nervously at his coat lapel as he spoke.

"Aw, speak English, boss," protested the negro. "I cain't unnerstand de folks heahabouts, but—why, I kin jest see *you* speak mah langwidge."

A feeling of relief came over Varley. Of course it was natural that he should address a negro in Spanish seeing that he had lived among the *sambos* of Ecuador for half a lifetime. But the man standing before him was not a Spanish-speaking negro. He was plainly an American. Varley laughed heartily.

"Hungry?" he asked.

"Dat's raight, boss, I laik to heah yo' all a-laffin'. Mebbe yo'll let a poh man sleep in yo' yahd tonight. No, ah ain't hungry, fo' de chickens is pow'ful plenty aroun' heah an' dey ain't no stealin' niggahs to spo'l mah style. An' dey'll gib me half a bucket o' milk in any o' dem fahms." He swung a comprehensive arm slowly into the darkness. "Dey'se good white folks. But dey won't lemme stay aroun'. De chilluns all run away w'en dey sees me, mighty scared o' dis poh Ca'lina niggah. Ain't got no place t' sleep. Cain't stay aroun' no place. Dat's mah trubble, boss."

And the negro turned the whites of two agitated eyes hopefully on the owner of the "yahd."

"Come in," assented Varley briefly. He led the way into the small parlor. "You can sleep there," said he, indicating the comfortable sofa. "I sleep up-stairs. I'm going to turn in now. There's a cold joint and pickles and a jug of cider in the pantry. Help yourself, and you can stay to breakfast in the morning. Good night."

And in this fashion Mr. Andrew Jackson Johnson came to Trevorder. Varley found it impossible to sleep that night. The arrival of the negro awoke hateful memories that he had long tried to stifle, that he had given up a life's work and traveled many thousands of miles to forget. In the dark hour preceding the dawn he descended cautiously to the parlor. His visitor was sleeping as peacefully as a child. Returning to bed Varley dozed fitfully. He was back in Ecuador, in the sweltering lowlands of the sugar and cocoa plantations. He was booted and spurred and riding a mettlesome steed. At his side rode a man with a cruel mouth and a hard chin showing beneath the down-turned brim of his Monte Cristi hat. They rode a path through a miniature forest of tall sugar-cane, emerging suddenly into a large clearing bounded by a collection of miserable wooden shacks. It was the *batey* of Varley's own property, the Ingenio Luz Maria. Two hundred yelling negroes rushed forward, surrounding them. They were pulling the cruel-faced man from his horse. He was Varley's overseer, and the *sambos* had decided that he had lived too long.

"Stop!" shouted Varley, but it was too late. The overseer struggled in the center of a crowd of demons intent on one horrible preoccupation, that of taking the life of their fellow-man.

VARLEY awoke. He was shaking like an aspen and bathed in a cold sweat. He had lived that accursed dream a hundred times, but never so vividly as this night. What was it he had done then? Ah, he remembered—could he ever forget! In a sudden access of rage he had discharged his revolver into the crowd of *sambos*. They had dropped around him—one, two, three. But too late. The overseer lay dead in a welter of blood on the ground, his proud bearing brought to pitiful derision by forty savage machetes. And then they had wrested Varley's revolver from him. Passing strange, but they had made no attempt to attack him. Two of the men had recovered in the hospital at Milagro, but the third had died. Irretrievably dead! Why hadn't the blighter recovered like the other two!

Varley had learnt later that the overseer thoroughly deserved the fate that had overtaken him. But he had been appalled at the callous attitude of the Ecuadorian authorities. They had treated the matter very lightly indeed. It appeared that shooting a *sambo* was something to be smiled at, extra-officially, in Eucador—when the slayer was a wealthy plantation owner. A thousand *sucres* to the widow of the dead man, five hundred to each of the wounded men, and the law was complied with! But to the sensitive soul of Varley the law was a grimly stalking figure that dogged all his steps, that would never be appeased until blood had been satisfied with blood. He had sold his valuable plantation and mill for less than half the value of the machinery he had put into it and had returned to England. Nobody had threatened his life, but he found that life unbearable in the country that he had once, at a *hacendados* banquet, referred to as "his adopted country."

His *sambos* had even invented excuses among themselves for the shooting, saying that a sudden touch of sun had made the *patron* temporarily irresponsible for his actions. But no excuses that they could invent had proved adequate to still the remorse in the heart of Varley. Varley, the *asesino*, the slayer, who was not, either by nature or temperament, a "killer." Of course, he knew *why* he had fired on that mob, but what was the good of knowing why if it was going to blast one's whole after existence. He couldn't even look Mrs. Trembath in the face. Dash it all! One can't sit still and see a man killed before one's eyes!

Varley had repeated those words over and over again to himself a thousand times. They were the straw to which he clung, and he repeated them mutteringly in the strangest places and under the funniest circumstances. Swimming far out in the summer blue of the Cornish sea, he would turn on his back to float, and gazing up to a cloudless sky, would find himself repeating that phrase, "but, surely, a fellow can't sit still and see a man killed before his eyes!"

Mr. Andrew Jackson Johnson remained at Trevorder the next day, and the next, and many days after. Varley found a peculiar satisfaction in befriending the homeless negro, and Mr. Johnson reciprocated by showing himself a very efficient man of his hands. He was a sailor, and knew how to manage Varley's small yawl to a nicety. From penury he was promoted to a salary and the respectability of a job. He had a stout pair of rowing arms, too, for such occasions as a failing wind demanded.

The winter came on apace. Gone were the sky and sea blues and the soft breezes of Lyonesse. Black skies domed the gray and swelling seas of winter. For weeks together great gales howled over the rugged contours of Penwith. Standing atop the magnificence of Tol-pedn-Penwith, a grander promontory than even the famed Land's End, it seemed to Varley that the Atlantic was about to engulf the cliffs of riven granite and all the land of Cornwall beneath its onward marching swell. The base of the Longships was a perpetual lather of foam, its summit a perpetual halo of spray, and the Trinity boat was unable to relieve the lighthouse or take out supplies. Not that that mattered, for the lighthouse always carries a month's reserve supply of food and oil during the stormy winter months.

Varley was no longer able to sail his yawl, and it was winch-drawn up with the fishing boats in Sennen Cove. Hardly a day passed without its report of wreck from some section of the stormy coast. A Cardiff collier piled on the Brisons, a Norwegian tramp holed and sinking on the treacherous shark-fin of the Runnelstone, a French freighter smashed to matchwood on the sailors' graveyard of the Manacles.

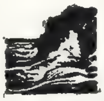
Varley saw the Sennen lifeboat launched in a full gale to take off the crew of the Cardiff collier. Hour after hour he waited in the wet of the spray-mist for the return. He had seen the boat dragged from the house that sheltered it; had seen the men who manned it—fishermen from the cove, representing half the adult male population of that insignificant village. He had noted them as they clambered into their places, the bulky lifebelts around their oilskins making them grotesque. There were no cheering crowds, only a few middle-aged women and young wives who came up with pasties for their men folk and helped ease the boat out of her house. He had seen the boat launched down the short incline into the maelstrom of the cove, tossed about like a cork on the outer heaving waters of Whitesand Bay; and it seemed to him impossible that she could ever return through that gale. And after many hours here she came returning—running before the northerly gale like a live thing, her square, red mainsail like to be torn from the stout mast that held it, her crew with oars ready for the last, the happiest and the most dangerous ordeal of all—the short, fierce pull through the house-high combers to home and safety.

The business of life-saving became an obsession with Varley. He began to haunt the cove, and especially the shed that housed the lifeboat. A strange contentment came over him as he passed his hands lovingly about the bulky lines of the lifeboat, a regulation sixteen-oared monster, rotund and staunch, so long that she filled the small shed, so deep on her wheels that it was necessary to use a ladder to climb into her. Varley desired to know a thousand things at once. Was it customary to go out as they had gone to the Brisons for the purpose of saving life in any weather? Did they never have accidents? Surely there was some reward for such heroic services? The fishermen answered these and many other questions in their homely Cornish speech. Varley learnt something about the work of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The work was voluntary, but there was never any trouble about getting men to man the boat.

There were accidents sometimes. Bound to be in that sort of business. Bill Nicholas had a crushed right hand from that last trip to the Brisons. Struck by a falling block from the collier, he were. They would put 'un to rights in Penzance hospital. Last winter a young fool—'twas Jim Trahair—had got washed clean out o' the boat, having neglected to strap hisself properly in his seat. No, they never saw 'un no more. Reward? Oh, aye, somethin' like twenty shillings a man for that there trip to Brisons. But that warn't no reward, that was for their time. They had been out five hours, but that warn't nothin'. Winter afore last they had launched the boat about five o'clock one morning and not returned until three o'clock of the afternoon of the day after. More'n thirty-four hours. How was that?

There had been a call to a schooner about twenty-five miles southwest of Land's End. After taking off the crew of eleven men the wind had suddenly veered, blowing a gale from the north. Such things, it seemed, happened in the best regulated gales. They had been compelled to wear the weather for all the first day and the following night, it being impossible to make Land's End in that sort of wind. And so after many days Varley propounded the question that had been agitating his breast. Might he, Varley, become a member of that lifeboat crew? He required no pay, no reward. He could row an oar. Thoughtful heads nodded him toward the "cox." The coxswain was the lord of the lifeboat. He, it appeared, could name his own crew. And the upshot of the matter was that Mr. Claude Varley was inscribed as a probationary member of the lifeboat crew.

"But no favors, mind 'ee; if thee ain't 'ere when call comes, there'll be others to take thy plaace."



ALTHOUGH it hardly ever snows in Cornwall—one has only to glance at the map to see why—there is a certain grim, gale-wrought grayness about the Cornish coasts in winter time that needs no extremities of cold or snow to accentuate the utter wildness of that land. There are no landscapes that are not also seascapes in Penwith. Stand on any height of land in winter and, looking south or north or west, there is always a swelling gray sea beyond, always a rack of storm clouds in the sky, always the cry of the petrel and the seagull over the fields and heaths. For the first time in many weeks Mrs. Trembath and Mr. Johnson found themselves in a state of axnious agreement on one important subject. The master they served was undoubtedly going mad!

"Sich weather to be out all day in!" protested Mrs. Trembath. "Thee's got no sense in thy wool 'ead to let 'un staay out all day in rain like that," said she indignantly, putting all the blame on the negro.

"Ma'am, I sho don't wanna walk about in de wet all day," returned Johnson. "But de boss am jest plumb crazy. We walks ten miles to near Penzance, and jest as I t'ink we'se agwine ter hit a chicken dinner in de Weste'n hotel, de boss he ups and ses, 'Johnson, we'se now about ter cihcumb'late dis heah coast.' An' we tu'ns away from dat dinner and we'se bin a-walking ebber since. An' all de way in de rain wid de boss a-talking to hisself. Ma'am, if Mist' Vahley gwine ter talk to hisself laik dat much moh, I'se gwine ter hit de dirt road fo' Plymouf ter see if ah kin git a ship what'll take me back to Ca'lina."

And the unsuspecting Varley, his cheeks red with exercise and the lift of tingling Atlantic gales, demolished a yeoman's dinner in lonely state in the parlor. He was happy in his returning health. By Jove!—but he was getting into condition with a vengeance. He would be playing rugger for county Cornwall by next winter if they'd only give him a trial! The meal ended, he got up and strolled hatless into the night. All was black around him, and the gale that whistled about the house carried, as from a nebulous distance, the roar of the surf-encompassed coast. He peered over the rugged descent of tor and moorland intently out to sea. Life was worth living after all, and the blood was coursing through his veins with a surge that he had not felt in twenty years. And the one regret that still made living bitter? That, too, might also be overcome.

As if in answer to his thoughts, a faint light pierced the night. A rocket! Another followed it, higher up this time. Then came a dull reverberation, like a gun fired a great way off. Varley stood like a man in a dream. After a minute he heard the gun again. He rushed into the house and up-stairs. Returning with a tweed cap and sou'wester, he hurriedly descended the path to the road. The wind smote him wildly as he ran, like a devil hurling a fiendish warning to the puny challenge of man. After running nearly a mile he left the main road and climbed a stile. Numerous other stone stiles that separated field from field were negotiated at breathless speed. He found his way amazingly in the dark. And as he half ran, half slid down the long grassy incline to Sennen Cove, a cheerful answering rocket from the shore showed him the lifeboat men grouped about their boat.

"Just in time, Lunnoner," said the coxswain gruffly as he saw Varley. "Number vower, starboard oar, an' mind boom when we goes about."

A small group of women appeared, bearing pasties. The pasty is as peculiarly of Cornwall as haggis is of Scotland, or blueberry pie of New England. It contains, within the hermetically sealed walls of a pastry big enough to cover a dinner plate, the complete elements of a meat and vegetable stew, even to the gravy, and has never been known to leak. One young woman, observing the Lunnoner, ran back to her cottage, returning with a second pasty.

"Take 'un, misteer," said she in her pleasing burr as Varley tied his lifebelt about him, "thee'l vind it pow'rvul coald out there. 'Twill waarm 'ee."

"Aye, thee's right, 'ooman," broke in a lifeboatman, "'twill warrm 'un. 'Tis the newmony we's afeard on these trips, not the sea."

Manifestly, these men were not afraid of the sea. Varley felt the cork hull lift beneath him as the first thundering white surges took the downward rush of the lifeboat, and he blessed the stout rope that held him to his thwart. Without it he would surely have left the boat one starboard oarsman short. Then came a terrible moment in the black night when the lifeboat, not yet clear of the awful breakers, and taken by some ebb of a cross current, drifted side on to a line of white that came crashing down on them from thirty feet away.

Came a bellow from the cox in the stern. A hoarse "Port oars!" Eight port oars dipped as one; the stem of the boat swung round to the onset of crackling fury; slid easily as a feather over that menace and out to the tossing black wastes beyond. They were rowing into the teeth of the northerly gale, and until the boat made clear of the treacherous Cowloe rocks there would be no sailing. Again Varley heard the dreadful boom of the guns—the last appeal of a sorely tried ship out in the night, somewhere beyond their ken. The faint light of the starboard lantern showed seas as steep as the walls of a house descending on their cockleshell of a boat, but always the bobbing cork hull surmounted the seas.

Away off to port appeared a white spouting of waters on a reef. It made a sound like a waterfall.

"Yon's Cowloe," shouted number five behind, and the shout came to Varley like a zephyr whisper. In balmy summer breezes Varley had often sailed his yawl quite close to the terrible Cowloe reef, and now, as he heard the faint clang of the gale-rocked bell-buoy drifting through the storm, all the raw reality of a remembered verse of Kipling's came to him like a flash:

I dip and I surge and I swing
In the rip of the racing tide,
By the gates of doom I sing,
On the horns of death I ride. . . .
Fretted and bound I bide peril whereof I cry.
Would I change with my brother a league inland?
(Shoal! 'Ware shoal!) Not I!

A sudden blue flare lighted the night to seaward with a ghastly glow, bringing a horrifying far-off glimpse of tortured spars and rigging all awry. At the same moment the coxswain bawled an order. The two number three oars came in, and their owners began to haul on the mainsail sheets. The square sail went up with a rush, the boom swung over Varley's head as the coxswain changed the course, and the lifeboat flew through the waves like some gigantic petrel of the night. Two tacks, it was announced, would bring them to the wreck. All oars came in as they rushed at a ten-knot clip into the northeast.

"HER steerin' gear be gone," shouted the coxswain through his cupped hands. "Layin' side on. Gives us a lee, though. Should take 'un off purty easy."

So had this expert in saving life at sea discerned many things during that short glimpse of the wreck in the hazy light of the blue flares.

"Thee's right," shouted back one of the men, "but I seen water nigh all over 'un. Quick work, my dear, if any's to be saaved."

Relieved from the fatigue of rowing, the men told what each had seen with many rumbling roars of the quaint Cornish speech. A bow oarsman had seen some men lashed to the rigging, and this information brought a growl from the coxswain.

"Like to be all froze," said he. "Damme ef it won't be a hard job takin' un off." And he bit a hunk out of his pasty savagely, drinking the gravy as he would have drunk from a cup.

"Aye, like the *Khyber* year afore last," yelled back another. "Three men froze to death when we cut 'un down, an' like to've stove the boat gettin' a line to 'un."

Except for the recurrent flash of the Longships light, now far abeam, Varley had no idea as to their whereabouts. But the Sennen fishermen, with the inherited sea-sense of generations of sea-going forebears, knew their way to a marvel. They even argued to fine points of the compass as to the best method of approaching their invisible objective. Another revolving light appeared ahead.

"Pendeen," announced the coxswain shortly, "stand by, goin' about!"

Varley bent low in his seat to escape the swinging boom. With a rattle it swung across, the sail filled with a report like a gun, and the boat shot away to the open sea. Varley felt hungry. He dug for his pasty, demolishing it in great bites. The lifeboat men were quiet now. Some subconscious telepathy seemed to communicate the thoughts of these rough fishermen to the stranger in their midst. Varley began to feel their preoccupation. The ticklish part of the business was undoubtedly before them. Taking men off a disabled ship would be hard work in any weather, but in a howling gale on a pitch-black night there would be distinct elements of peril. Varley noticed the stout cork fenders below the gunwales. These were built into the boat, as in all boats of the Institution, a necessary part of its construction. Placed over them were an additional defence of mat fenders.

Once again a blue flare lighted the night, and Varley's heart leaped as he saw the dark hull and shattered rigging of what had once been a three-masted schooner, grim and ghostly along the crest of a charging wave. She lay broadside on to the northerly gale, wallowing deep, but remarkably upright, and with all her three masts standing. The lifeboat's sail came rattling down in response to a shouted order. Sixteen long sweeps brought them slowly but more steadily toward the lee side of the schooner *Columbine*—Mobile to Swansea with mine props. Nine men leaped from the slippery deck as the lifeboat, under a miracle of close steering, passed the schooner amidships on the swelling crest of a wave. So close that waterlogged ship and bobbing lifeboat fell, rose and fell again on the selfsame wave, and Varley, his legs bent about his thwart, was able to lean out and grasp the hand of the ninth man that leaped, a timid negro boy doubtful about the leap.

The lifeboat circled off into the night, the coxswain swearing furiously in his beard on the imbecility of men who made his work harder by lashing themselves to rigging. Three men remained to be saved, two lashed to the shrouds and one to the mainmast. One of the rescued men reported that there was yet a fourth man somewhere on deck. The thing was ridiculously easy, thought Varley. And making a second guess he conjectured that saving lives on stormy nights at sea was one of those things that was easy—like riveters balancing themselves on moving girders, or lumbermen dancing over a log jam—when one knew how to do it. It appeared that shooting a line to the schooner would be useless, for not a soul on board was capable of helping out in this matter. As the lifeboat men debated on the best method of taking off the remaining men, the negro boy laid his hand on Varley's knee.

"Mister," said he, "save me po' ole dad. He's in dat riggin' tied up. So scared he jest done tied hisself up in all de rope he could find. An' now dey won't be able to cut him loose, mister. O, lordy, lordy!"

And he rolled the whites of his eyes to the night and fell into a gibberish of alternate praying and moaning. The idea of an old negro tying himself to the shrouds with all the rope he could find did not strike Varley as particularly amusing at that time. The boy's hand clutching at his knee moved him strangely. He laid his hand, warm from rowing, on the shivering hand of the boy.

"We'll get your dad for you," he shouted reassuringly, and a great resolve made his heart leap as he spoke.

He had only the vaguest idea as to how the thing should be done, but he would do the impossible. In disobedience of all lifeboat regulations, he lifted the rope that held him to his seat from the hook at his side. Somebody would surely have to board the schooner if the helpless men on board were to be saved. Once again the sweeps brought the lifeboat circling toward the wreck. But in that moment a tremendous surge struck the *Columbine* on the weather quarter, altering her position slightly. Very slightly, but sufficiently for the next wave to send her slithering down bow on to the lifeboat, the whole force of the gale on her broad beam. Straight for the waist of the rescuing boat she came like some gaunt specter of perversity intent on slaying the devoted men battling to save their fellows from death by drowning. The gale swept her on though she bore not a yard of sail. There was no time to escape; a pull to either port or starboard would still have left the lifeboat in the path of the approaching schooner.

"Starboard oars out to stave off!" roared the coxswain, and in his voice was the grimness of despair.

OUT went the eight oars straight as the rowers could hold them, their legs braced against the thwarts, their fellows on the port side instinctively turning and shoving their backs into the shoulders of their comrades taking the strain. Varley breathed a prayer as he held his oar-blade at the bow-chains of the approaching ship. With a roar of churning waters the schooner was upon them. Her long bow crashed into the lifeboat's short mast, snapping it short with a report like a cannon. Three of the outheld oar-blades snapped, and two men went rolling into the bottom of the boat. But the strain held, and the rescuing boat slid safely along the schooner's glistening hull.

As Varley saw a rope that dangled over her side, he sprang to sudden action. Leaping atop the broad gunwale he seized the rope, and before any of his startled comrades realized his intention, had drawn himself to the schooner's deck. Only four men were there—two lashed to the rigging, one to the mainmast, while the fourth rolled helplessly in the wash of the scuppers. Varley dragged this man to the lee of a hatchway, relieving him of his sheath-knife as he did so. There he tied him as securely as was possible. Great following seas were now driving the *Columbine* toward the coast, but that coast was yet many miles away. While the looming seas came from aft there would be no great danger to the vessel. But just as Varley began to scale the precarious foothold of the sagging ratlines, the fickle *Columbine* decided to change her course again. Sliding down the side of a mountainous wave she staggered at the deepest point of an awesome black valley; staggered and turned her head into the wind. The next wave struck her quarter with a crash that shook every timber in her. Varley succeeded in cutting loose one half frozen man. On letting him down to the deck, he was horrified to see that that deck was half submerged beneath a wash of swirling waters. Wave after wave rocked the ship as he climbed higher into the rigging. The second man had lashed himself well above the first. Hand over hand the rescuer strove, his sea-boots and oilskins a deadening weight, his bulky lifebelt an obstacle to quick progress. And as he clung panting to the shrouds beside the half conscious man he had come to rescue, a savage seventh wave struck the reeling *Columbine* under the weather bow. She gave a terrible lurch to leeward. Varley felt his stomach turn sick as he observed that she lay on her side, wallowing in the sea and seemingly unable to return to a level keel. Some premonition of disaster brought the lashed sailor to his senses.

"We'se gawn!" he moaned dismally. "We'se gawn! Aw, man, cut me loose, we'se gawn dis time!"

"Sure!" roared Varley into the whistling night, assuming a cheerfulness he did not feel. "And then we'll all get a swim for our money. But hold on tight; we're not over the deck but the deep sea now!"

And suiting the action to the word, he cut the ropes that bound the sailor. Decidedly it seemed that the men left on the *Columbine* were about to get a swim—of sorts. Each successive wave heeled the shivering hull farther over to leeward, until it became difficult to hang on to the swaying shrouds any longer. And then Varley's companion spoke an inspiring word:

"Mebbe we'se all right if we kin hang on a bit longer," said he. "This heah ship's full ob lumber."

What a wonderful thing is the faintest ray of hope coming in the midst of intolerable depression!

"Lumber?" echoed Varley. "Why, then surely she'll keep afloat. There's a lifeboat around here somewhere with a crew of hearties that'll take us off as soon as they can get here. Let's get down to the deck."

Slowly the two descended. Feebly they struggled through the knee-deep water that became neck-deep as wave after wave spouted across the deck. Clutching ringbolts, rail stanchions and anything they could, they made their way to the mainmast. As if in answer to their action a faint hail came to them out of the night.

"Coming!" yelled the voice, "stand by to jump!"

Varley quickly cut loose the man tied to the mast. The first man he had released from the rigging appeared miraculously.

"Hung on all right, all right," he announced, "the cold bath you dropped me in woke me up. But I'll keep to the Gulf after this."

He was a Texan and shivered as he spoke. These three would be able to jump, thought Varley; but the fourth, the sailor tied in the lee of the aft hatch, was in a bad way. He was unconscious. Varley divested himself of his lifebelt, tying it around the inanimate form. He then tied one end of a long line around the lifebelt and the other end around his own body. The sagging form of the unconscious sailor was laid half over the schooner's rail, Varley with the slack of the line in his hand. And the four men made ready to jump. Making a perfect semicircle the lifeboat loomed up out of the night.

"Jump!" yelled a dozen voices as one.

The Texan threw a struggling terrier far into the lifeboat, and the three sailors flew through the air after it. Varley paused a fraction of a second after the others.

"MAN to haul aboard!" he bawled, showing the slack of line coiled behind him. And jumping, he fell safely in the lifeboat. Willing arms dragged the sailor from the schooner's rail and through the seething water to safety.

"Take thy oar, number vower," ordered the coxswain, and Varley, spent with his exertions, took his place dutifully.

The Sennen lifeboat had need of oars that night. With her mast gone it meant rowing every yard of the way back to Sennen Cove. Hungry following seas raced behind them, great black valleys opened up before them down which they slid with a drop that would have turned sick the stomach of the average landsman. Hour after hour they rowed, until even weariness left them, and they dipped their sweeps mechanically, like rowers in a trance. So over a seemingly interminable switchback of heaving hills and slippery valleys he lifeboat came to Whitesand Bay. Varley in his utter languor heard the clang of the Cowloe bell-buoy, and blessed it. They were near the end of their night's work.

Black night turned to gray, and presently through the greasy rack of clouds came the faint albescence of a dawn. With tired eyes and drawn faces the men bent their wearied arms to the final test of the breakers. No mechanical rowing here, but every nerve tense, every muscle alert to row a sudden thirty-two to the minute when ordered. On the top of a great white roller they flew up the cove straight as an arrow, high and dry; the women worked the capstan that drew the lifeboat to her shed. The Rev. Trimmer Morris, vicar of Sennen, honorary member of the Cornwall County Council, unpaid local representative of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution—one of those noble men who are ever serving their kind in a hundred ways and, it might be stated, on a stipend barely sufficient to keep body and soul together—the vicar of Sennen received the tired crew as they climbed out of the lifeboat.

Steaming jugs of cocoa for all, blankets for shipwrecked sailors, with a distribution of twelve exposure-sick mariners among as many families of fishermen. One unconscious man to be hurried by trap to the nearest doctor in St. Just Churchtown, seven miles away.

"By the way," asked Varley, "may I take care of two of these men? I've plenty of room for them, Mr. Morris. The two negroes, if it's all the same to you."

"Certainly, Mr. Varley," replied the Rev. Morris. "You can all go along in the trap with the sick man. I see your idea. You have a negro at Trevorder, and you think he may be able to make these two feel more at home than they would elsewhere. Quite right, quite right, and very good of you, too."

The clergyman hurried about the business of taking names, for he would have a lengthy report to make, and a long telegram to send to the Shipwrecked Mariners Aid Society. And so occupied he met the coxswain, Tom Trewhella. Mr. Thomas Trewhella had considerable information to impart about the conduct of one Mr. Claude Varley.

The dawn broke splendid after the gale—a typical Penwith dawn of thundering green and white surges under a winter sun, of speeding fleecy clouds in a pale gray sky, of a most bracing saltiness in the air. The Rev. Trimmer Morris approached Varley.

"I hear very fine things of you, Mr. Varley. Very fine things indeed," said he, and the seal of a high approval rang in his tones. "With your permission I shall make a special report to the Institution about your boarding a wreck in a gale. Such courage—"

But Varley cut him short with an impatient gesture.

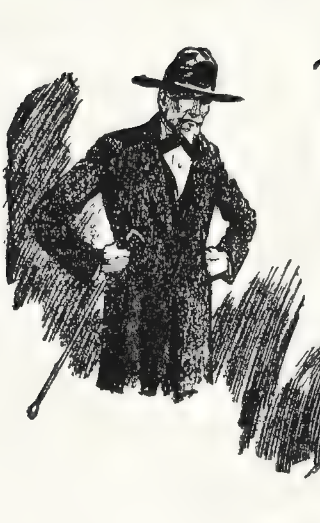
"Why drag me in?" he demanded as he pointed to the lifeboat men scattering to their cottages up the cove. "Those fellows do this sort of thing on an average once a week during the winter, and think nothing of it. I had to summon up the jolly old sinews, I can tell you, to keep from turning green with fear last night. Besides, I was gratifying a purely selfish ambition to taste danger, adventure, life—whatever you like *to call it.*"

"And to save life—" returned the clergyman quietly— "was that a part with your ambition?"

And the Rev. Trimmer Morris was astonished at the look that Varley gave him; it was like the guilty stare of a man caught in the act of a crime. But it vanished as suddenly as it came, and a bright smile overspread Varley's face as his gaze fell on two negroes, father and son, engaged in sharing a half-gallon jug of steaming cocoa to the accompaniment of many happy grimaces.

"Ambition?" echoed Varley. "Exactly. Well, look at 'em. Dash it all! You can't sit still and see 'em drown before your bally eyes, can you?"

And turning to invite his alien guests to Trevorder, he left the clergyman greatly wondering at the boyish abandon of his voice.



Boulé and the Major

By Nevil Henshaw

Author of "Stark of Auburn," "The Thrown Death," etc.

IT WAS when I was helpin' to run Auburn plantation for Major Stark. I was down on the books as field overseer, but that didn't half cover it. Except for lookin' after the accounts and such, I was pretty well in charge of the place.

Not that the old man didn't know his job. There wasn't a better planter in that part of Louisiana than the Major. But he'd had a fuss with his son, and the son had left him, and he was kind of sulkin' and lettin' things slide.

It was pretty hard goin' in those days. The Major was as quick and sharp to land on you as a hornet. He was a little gray, dried-up-lookin' man, but he sure packed a powerful sting.

I don't mean he was the bullyin', cussin' sort. That was just the trouble. You can stand a good blowin' up every now and then, especially if it comes from headquarters. It's different when your boss is quiet and formal and sarcastic.

That was the Major. I was never Nick Wilson to him even when he was speakin' about me to some one else. But he made that "mister" of his a handle for some pretty sharp things. Sometimes it would almost have been easier if he'd held his tongue and took to his quirt.

I'd quit him if I hadn't understood him. But I knew that once he'd got over his grouch, he'd be a different man. Just then his trouble had him runnin' under high pressure. Hittin' out at folks was only his way of lettin' off a little steam. What he needed was somethin' that would give him a chance to let off a lot. All of which explains what happened when I got him tied up with Boulé and the Fondiables.

It was durin' the slack season that comes after grindin'. Thanks to a short crop we'd finished up early that year. So havin' some spare time on my hands, I went out one mornin' to look at some mules for the Major.

The man who owned 'em lived way back in the wilds of the Fausse Point country. By the time I'd got through with him and was on my way home again it was pretty near noon. I'd just hit a cross-road by a big live-oak and tryin' to figure the quickest way home when I heard the *clump* of a horse. So I waited, and pretty soon a man rode into sight. He was a young, sleepy-lookin' sort of Cajun, and he had a big bundle behind his saddle, with the handle of an ax stickin' out of it.

"Hey!" I calls to him. "Which is the shortest way to town?"

He waited till he got up to me, and then swung his arm in a circle.

"*Là bas*," says he.

"Sure," says I. "*Là bas*. But what road?"

He thought a moment, rollin' his eyes.

"That one," he answers, pointin' the way he'd come.

"You're certain?" I asks.

"No," says he. "Me, I'm not certain. But what difference. You keep on and some time you pass by town."

I give it up and begin to roll a cigaret. Seein' which, he borrowed the makin's and started in on a smoke of his own. While he was doin' it he told me all about himself, not rattlin' it off like most Cajuns, but drawlin' it out in a slow, lazy kind of way.

His name was Boulé Blanc, and he come from that part of Fausse Point. The year before he'd took up with a girl named Manon Breaux and decided to marry her. Not havin' the money, he'd gone to the swamps and worked till the fever got him. Now he was back with his wages and ready for his bride.

"All right, Boulé," says I. "I wish you luck. But this isn't gettin' me home. As you're from these parts and don't know anything more about the roads than I do, I think I'll take the opposite direction from the one you give me."

I started off and made round the live-oak and saw that there was a paper tacked to the other side. Thinkin' it might help me, I rode in for a look. But it was only one of the dance notices the Cajuns put around. It was printed in English and said:

WEDDING WEDDING
AT
ALPHA ROUSELL
HALL
FAUSSE POINT, LA., ON
SATURDAY, NOV. 16,
Mr. Agricola Vedrine to Miss Manon Breaux. Dance starts at 7 P. M. sharp.
MUSIC BY
DUBOIN'S BAND

I read the notice over a second time. Then I made the mistake of goin' back to Boulé. Still havin' a half inch of his cigaret, he was right where I'd left him.

"Boulé," I asks, "is your girl the only Manon Breaux around here?"

"But yes," he answers. "Why do you ask?"

"Because she got married in November," says I. "I just read it in a notice on the other side of that tree. Of course it's none of my business, but I thought you might want to know."

It took about a minute for it to sink into Boulé. Once it was there he climbed off his horse.

"It's Cola Vedrine?" he asks, like he already knew.

"Yes," says I. "That was the man's name."

"So," says Boulé, and yanked the bundle off his saddle.

Inside was the blue suit and yellow shoes he'd bought for his weddin' outfit, but he didn't give 'em so much as a glance. He just fumbled round till he brought out a gun. It was one of the cheap, nickel sort, and the frame and cylinder was rusted into a solid block. After he'd made sure the thing was no good by strainin' at the trigger with both hands, he threw it into the road.

"You have a pistol?" he asks me.

I had, but I wasn't figurin' on it's bein' used in a Cajun killin'.

So Boulé turned back to his bundle.

"*Bien,*" says he. "I will use my ax, me. Come now and you will see."

I don't know just why I went with him. I reckon it was because, havin' started the business, I felt it was up to me to see it through. Then, too, I knew that, thanks to the ax, it was likely to be more funny than serious.

Boulé kept mighty quiet as we rode along. He had his ax all ready across his saddle, and every now and then he'd heft it like he expected to see his man come jumpin' out at him from the bushes. After a mile or so we sighted a buildin' at another crossroad. It was a Cajun store with the usual little gamblin' room set off to one side of the gallery.

"Broussard's," says Boulé, and dug in his heels.

As we loped up the storekeeper come out to see who it was.

"Eh, you, Boulé!" he calls. "Then you are back again?"

"Yes, I'm back, me," says Boulé perfectly serious. "And Cola—he's here?"

Broussard looked at the ax and then at the gamblin' room.

"My friend," he begins, "you have no quarrel with Cola. If you are wise—"

Boulé didn't hear him. He was too busy pilin' out of his saddle and makin' for the gallery. Just as he reached it, the door of the gamblin' room opened and a man stuck out his head. He was a big, hulkin' brute, and you could see he wasn't any too pleased over bein' disturbed at his game.

At sight of him Boulé went clean crazy.

"So, Cola!" he yells. "Take this for Manon!"

And he run forward, swingin' his ax.

For all his size Cola was quick. He had his head in and the door slammed to before Boulé got fairly started. I heard him yell as the bolt snapped home. After that there was a fuss like scared cattle in a pen.

The gamblin' room had only one window. It was about the size of a bandanna and stood some five feet from the ground. But that didn't bother Cola. He went through it like a bird and his friends come after him. And when they hit the road they kept on goin'. From the dust they raised, they was travelin' some.

II

AFTER I'd quit laughin' a little, I got down and went up to where Boulé was smashin' in the door. Broussard had took a hand now, and was yellin' and wavin' his arms. But it didn't do any good. Boulé kept on till the bolt tore loose and the door swung open.

Inside things was pretty well wrecked. The table had been turned over and the floor was a mess of broken glass and scattered cards. Havin' made sure the room was empty, Boulé cussed and threw down his ax.

"So," says Broussard. "You have made a fine job of it, my friend."

Boulé run his hand into his pocket.

"If it is the damage—" he begins.

Broussard shook his head.

"No," says he. "That is easily arranged. For the rest, I tried to save you. Even though Cola has troubled your girl—"

"Troubled her?" breaks in Boulé. "But he has married her, Broussard. It is in a paper on that big tree."

You could see the understandin' come into Broussard's face. It was like settin' a lamp in a window.

"Boulé," says he. "You are a fool. You did not wait to make sure. It was this way. Word came that you were sick. Then Cola swore that you had died. So Manon agreed to marry him, and the arrangements were made. When she found out that it was a lie she broke up the wedding. That was not nice for Cola. And here you come—"

Boulé was smilin' now.

"Cola?" he puts in. "What do I care, me, for Cola?"

Broussard looked at him kind of pityin'.

"My friend," says he, "you do not know. Cola, he is now chief of the Fondiables."

Boulé's smile flickered out, and his mouth dropped open. That one word "Fondiables" had cut him down right next to the ground. Havin' seen him in action a few minutes before, I was clean up in the air.

Of course I knew about the Fondiables. Everybody in Fausse Point did. They was a gang of Cajun bullies that had made their start by ridin' into a church one Sunday. In puttin' 'em out the priest had called 'em "*Enfants diable*," which was his way of sayin' children of the devil. Afterward they'd shortened it down to somethin' that sounded like Fondiables.

I'd been told they'd played some pretty mean tricks on the other Cajuns. I'd even heard 'em yellin' and shootin' at nights as they rode past Auburn. But after what had happened in the gamblin' room it didn't look to me as if Boulé had much to worry about. Anyway, I horned in and told him so.

Broussard took me up the minute I was through.

"My friend," says he, "you do not understand. Just because a man runs from cold steel, it does not mean that he will not come back again. Cola comes when you do not expect him. And always his men are with him. Afterward he does things to you, things that you will not forget."

Boulé shivered, and his eyes looked like they was tryin' to crawl out of his head.

"*Dieu!*" says he. "I did not know, me. They are something, those Fondiables. I have seen the things they have done."

"And what if you have?" I comes back at him. "Is that any reason why you should let 'em do 'em to you?"

But Boulé was through. He'd even forgotten about his girl.

"No, no," says he. "It is the Fondiables. How should I know that Cola was one of them, much less the chief. Now I am *foutou*. I can not go back to the swamp. And if I stay here—"

"That is right," says Broussard. "If you stay in Fausse Point Cola will get you. No place is safe from him."

What had gone before was bad enough. But this was a little too much.

"See here, you two," says I "Have you ever heard of Auburn plantation? It's in Fausse Point, and I'm the overseer. Likewise I'm here to tell you that it's one place where any one or anything is safe from this Cola and his crowd."

Broussard went back to his pityin' look.

"So," says he, "if the Fondiables have not troubled you, that is your good luck. Be content with it, my friend."

All along I'd been gettin' madder and madder. Now I boiled over. The only thought in my head was to show Broussard what I thought of him and his Fondiables.

"All right," says I. "I'll settle this business. "Let Boulé come with me, and I'll give him a job at Auburn. If these bullies can get him there, they're welcome."

Broussard shrugged the way a Cajun does to save himself the trouble of arguin'. Boulé, naturally, begun to back and fill.

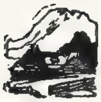
"Me, I don't know," says he. "Perhaps if I try that swamp again—"

Of course I had to make up his mind for him. I reached out and got him by the arm.

"Come on and get on your horse," says I. "I'm late enough as it is."

Two minutes later we was off along the road Broussard pointed out for us. I already knew I'd made a mistake, but I couldn't go back on my bluff. When it comes to fools, an old fool ain't in it with a mad one.

III



THAT night I put Boulé in an empty room I had in my quarters. Next mornin', havin' thought things over, I said a few words to him before signin' him on.

"As you know," says I, "I don't take much stock in this talk about the Fondiables. But just the same, if I was you, I'd stick close for a while. You're safe, and there's no use in takin' any chances."

"Have no fear," says Boulé. "Me, I do not pass by that gate for nothing."

"All right," says I. "Now take your ax and get out some cord wood there by the edge of the field. You'll see the part where we've started clearin'."

The next thing was to report the business to the Major. Not bein' very proud of it, I just told him that I'd signed on a wood-chopper. He didn't say anything, and I figured that, as usual, he'd let it slide.

But you never could count on the Major. An hour or so later I saw him ridin' back in the direction of the timber. And a little after that he looked me up in the field.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "I have just come from inspecting your new wood-chopper. He has a very light touch. Or at least I couldn't hear him, although I waited both before going in and after coming out of the woods."

"Yes, sir," says I. "I'll speak to him.

"You will," says he. "And it will only be necessary to tell him that he's fired."

I thought a moment. As far as Boulé was concerned I didn't care. I'd done what I could for him and, Cajun-like, he'd laid down on me. But there was Cola and the Fondiables. What would they think when they heard I'd put my man back in the road in less than twenty-four hours?

They wouldn't listen to any talk about firin' him for slackin'. They'd figure we was just naturally scared. And afterward they'd act accordin'ly. Even if they didn't take it out on us, they'd make it hot for the rest of Fausse Point.

It wasn't easy, but in the end I put it up to the Major. I come clean too, givin' him the whole thing from beginnin' to end.

"Well, Mr. Wilson," says he when I'd finished, "it looks to me as if you've taken a good deal on yourself."

I reckon I looked as silly as I felt.

"Yes, sir," says I. "I sure have. That's why I'm tryin' to divide it with you."

The Major waited a second, twistin' his bridle. While he done so I could see myself ridin' out with Boulé.

"Humh!" says he. "I've heard of the Fondiables. Just what did you tell me that storekeeper said about them?"

"That no place in Fausse Point was safe from 'em," I answers.

The Major smiled. To have seen him you'd thought he was tryin' to bite somethin'.

"We'll see about that," says he. "Send that Cajun of yours up to me. And then leave him alone. From now on he'll be in my charge. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," says I. "And I want to say I'm sorry."

"You are," says the Major. "But I've had sorry overseers before. They don't make any other kind."

IV

I DON'T know what arrangements the Major made. Boulé never told me, chiefly, I think, because he didn't understand himself. But that day after dinner he was out on the Major's front lawn with a rake.

And, as the old man rode herd on him most of the afternoon, he come pretty near puttin' in some work.

He was after me the minute he knocked off. And, in spite of what he'd been through, this time he showed me what he was like when he was really excited.

"I am done," he begins. "Strike me off the book."

"What's the matter?" I asks. "Don't you like your job?"

"Like it?" he yells. "Me, Boulé Blanc? I am a swamper. I come here to chop wood. And what happens? I become a raker of leaves. As for that old Major—"

He quit and threw up his hands. French though he was, he couldn't put it into words.

I didn't altogether blame him. But I had no idea of lettin' him leave.

"Boulé," says I," I don't exactly get you. Of course you can quit if you want to. But what about Cola?"

Boulé figured over it a moment and then raised his shoulders.

"Cola, he's bad, yes," says he. "But that old Major—"

He give up again.

"All right," says I. "If you're through, you're through, and that settles it. But first you'll have to see that old Major. He's boss here, you know. Just go up to the big house and tell him you've got enough. Then I can sign you off."

Boulé waited a minute, diggin' one foot in the ground. Then he shambled off toward the big house. Half way there he turned round again. He come back pretty near on a run.

"That is all right," says he. "I will stay, me. Keep me in the book."

Next day he finished the lawn. And the day after that the old man put him back in the woods. This time there wasn't anything wrong with his touch. You could hear him from sun-up to dark.

So far we hadn't heard a thing from the Fondiables, and I don't think we would have heard from 'em if Boulé had been satisfied to leave well enough alone. But of course he only waited till Saturday night before slippin' off to see his girl. And of course Cola was waitin' for just this chance to nab him.

If Boulé's horse had been slow that would have ended it. As it was, he managed to break away and beat the bunch back to Auburn. But when he finally hit the big gate and swung through it, the others kept on in after him and chased him half way to the quarters, yellin' and shootin' their guns in the air. Then they turned back again, leavin' Boulé to spend the rest of the night hidin' out in the field.

I heard the fuss, but I didn't investigate it. Knowin' exactly what had happened, I turned over and went to sleep again. Now, thinks I, everything will be all right. Havin' learned his lesson, Boulé will stay put till the Fondiables forget him for somethin' else. But, as usual, I hadn't counted in the Major.

Next mornin' I was ordered to report to his office at once. When I got there he was sittin' by his gun locker, goin' over a rifle with an oily rag. All of which told me he'd already made his arrangements. But as usual he took his own time in workin' round to 'em.

"Mr. Wilson," he begins, "did you happen to notice any disturbance last night?"

"Yes, sir," says I. "About 9:30. It was Boulé. He went out, and the Fondiables chased him back again."

"Humh!" said the Major. "Did they leave him at the gate?"

"No, sir," says I. "They rode in a piece. But they didn't do anything. It was just a bluff."

You could almost see the Major swell. If there was anything that got him, it was to have folks come on his land.

"I see," says he. "And what, may I ask, did you do, Mr. Wilson?"

"Why nothin', sir," I answers. "I knew what it was and, as I've said, Cola and his bunch rode right out again. As for that Cajun, it was comin' to him. I'd warned him to lay low, but he's just naturally a fool."

The Major looked at me as if I was somethin' that had been sent to him to examine.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "I despair of ever making you understand certain things. Indeed, I am almost wondering if you haven't missed the real fool in this business. Has it occurred to you that Boulé is an employee here and that, as such, he has just as much right to the use of the public road as you or myself?"

"Why, yes, sir," says I, "if you put it that way. But under the circumstances—"

"Forget them," he snaps. "I'll arrange any and all circumstances around this place. Now listen to me. You tell Boulé that he's going out again tonight, and that we'll be waiting for him at the big gate when he gets back. Can you understand that?"

"Yes, sir," says I.

"I doubt it," growls the Major. "But you can tell that Cajun that I know what I'm about."

But for all that Boulé wasn't satisfied. When I give him the order he just naturally refused to go.

"Not me," says he. "I go out last night. It was enough."

"All right," says I. "You can take your choice. Either you go out or I'll fire you."

"But you can not fire me," he comes back at me. "You have said so yourself. It is for that old Major to do so."

In the end I give it up and reported back to the old man.

"Humh!" says he. "I'll see."

And he did; with the result that soon after dark that night the two of us escorted Boulé to the big gate. The Major had his rifle, and I was carryin' a second one he'd loaned me. Boulé had refused a third in favor of a Colt. He told me privately that in case he met Cola he didn't want anything to come between him and his horse.

"Now," says the Major, "do just as I've told you. Ride straight to your girl, and if you meet Cola or any of his crowd, keep right on by. If they try to trouble you, fire into the air. We'll be right along."

"Yes," says Boulé. "If you should hear me."

"We'll hear you all right," says the Major. It's a still night, and you haven't far to go."

"Me, I don't know—" begins Boulé.

"You'd better start," says the Major. "My patience is beginning to wear thin in spots."

After he'd ridden off we sat on our horses and listened for twenty minutes or so.

"Very well," says the Major. "I reckon he's made it. I'm expecting them to wait for him on his way home. I told him to leave in a couple of hours. We'll come back then."

We started home and was half way in when we heard a poundin' of hoofs behind us. So we pulled up, and pretty soon here comes Boulé, stretched out on his horse and makin' the run of his life. He'd have drove through us if we hadn't rode out and blocked him. As it was, he come pretty near wreckin' me before I got hold of his bridle.

"Well," asked the Major, "what is it?"

Before he answered, Boulé took a good look around to make sure he wasn't pursued.

"It is Cola," he pants. "He and three others. They were far up the road at the bend. I all but ran into them. If my horse had not shied—"

"That's all right about that," breaks in the Major. "What did Cola do?"

Boulé smiled. Even in the moonlight you could see he was mightily pleased with himself.

"Do?" he answers. "But he did nothing. He had no chance. Me, I was too quick for him."

The Major sounded like he was chokin'.

"What?" he says. "Do you mean to say that you ran right off? That you didn't pass him or shoot into the air or follow any of my instructions?"

Boulé give him one of those pityin' looks that I'd noticed so strong in Broussard.

"M'sieu," says he, "I am no fool. If you say to me, 'Boulé, there is a bear in the field. Go out and shake hands with him,' I will touch my hat and say, 'Yes, m'sieu.' But if I go to the field and see that bear—me, I will pass round him."

The Major didn't say anything. He couldn't. He just sat on his horse and made noises in his throat while Boulé loped on to the quarters. And right then, while the old man was glarin' after him, Cola and his crowd trotted up past the big gate.

When they caught sight of us down the plantation road they all yelled, and some of 'em fired in the air. The Major grunted and yanked out his rifle, but after a second he slid it back and shook up his horses.

"Keep on with me," he orders.

After that he closed up tight. Perhaps it was because all the way in those Cajuns kept yellin' as they loafed up the road.

When we got to the office, the Major stood his rifle in a corner and sat down at his desk. I've said he reminded me of a hornet. Right then he looked like the great granddaddy of 'em all. But he didn't fly out at me. He just thought a while and then jerked up his head.

"Well, Mr. Wilson," says he. "You started this thing. What do you advise now?"

I stalled the best I could.

"I don't know," says I. "This shootin' on a public road ought to be against the law. Perhaps if we spoke to the sheriff—"

The Major smacked his desk so hard I rose clean out of my chair.

"Law!" he snaps. "Sheriff! Don't you suppose I can look after my own place? No, Mr. Wilson, I'll settle this thing myself or it won't be settled at all. This trouble now. You say it started about a girl? Very well. What do you know about this girl?"

"Nothing, sir," says I, "only her name."

The Major got up and begun to turn down the lamp.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "you seem to specialize in ignorance of essentials. But no matter. The girl won't be as big a fool as Boulé. It can't be done."

V

NEXT mornin' the Major rode off bright and early. When he got back near noon, he called me out of the field. He looked just as dry and bitter as ever, but somehow I knew he was pleased. It kind of leaked out in the way he spoke.

"Mr. Wilson," he begins, "have you noticed that vacant cabin by the coulée recently?"

"Yes, sir," I answers.

"What shape is it in?"

"Pretty fair."

"Then make what repairs are necessary and report to me."

I was curious, but I knew enough not to ask anything. I just said, "Yes, sir," and went after the job.

The cabin by the coulée was a two-room shack with a big willow tree in front and a nice little garden-patch behind. By the time I'd fixed the roof and windows and done some whitewashin', it looked mighty snug. The day after I reported the work finished, one of the carts went into town and come back with a pile of cheap furniture. When it was unloaded at the cabin I wasn't surprized, but my curiosity had me where it was up to me to find out somethin' or bust.

Luckily I didn't have to wait long. The hands was unloadin' the last of the stuff when the Major rode up and turned in under the willow. The minute the cart pulled off I went after him.

"So we're gettin' a new tenant?" I begins.

"Just so," says he, and he drew in his bridle like he was gettin' ready to ride off. But the next second he eased back in his saddle again. I reckon he was in my fix. He just naturally couldn't stand it any longer.

"It's Boulé's girl," he goes on.

I goggled at him a second.

"You mean she's comin' here to work?" I asks.

"Worse than that," says he. "She's coming here to marry Boulé."

I begun to see it, but I didn't let on. On the few occasions when he done so, the Major had his own way of explainin' things. So I just goggled again and said I didn't understand.

"Of course not," says the Major. "I didn't expect you to, Mr. Wilson. Your idea was to go to the sheriff. I went to the girl. As she began the trouble, I decided to let her end it. And she will. She has sense and courage. So much, in fact, that she was not overanxious to fall in with my plan. This furniture was an inducement. She'll earn it, and more, I'm afraid. The wedding will be a week from next pay day."

He stopped and looked at me as if, havin' spoke his piece, he was waitin' for the applause. But I knew it wouldn't do to be too quick.

"And Cola?" I asks.

"That is his affair," says the Major. "He won't trouble the girl before the wedding. I have made sure she can look out for herself. It will be different with that Cajun of ours. I have some timber on a place up around St. Martin, and I'm going to send him to look it over. That will keep him safe until the wedding day. And then—"

He stopped again, bitin' off one of his gritty smiles.

"I see," says I. "You'll have Cola goin' and comin'."

"Exactly," says the Major. "The wedding will be here at Auburn. If he tries to stop it we'll be ready for him. If he don't, he will be the joke of Fausse Point. You see, Mr. Wilson? It is really quite simple, after all."

He was mightily pleased as we rode off. It was the first time he'd been anyways human since his son had left.

"Nick," says I to myself, "you've blundered into the very thing you wanted. All the old man needs is to let off a little more steam."

We were almost at the big house before I thought of somethin' else.

"What does Boulé make of it?" I asks.

The Major looked at me like he thought I was crazy.

"Why, I don't know," says he. "What has he got to do with it anyway?"

"Nothin'," says I. "Only you know that Cajun—"

"All right," says the Major. "Send him here now. I'll have to give him his orders. I want him to leave the first thing in the morning."

I caught Boulé just as he was comin' in from his work. And bein' curious still, I went back with him to the office. After the Major had told him where he was to go and what he was to do and when he was to come back, he broke the news.

"Boulé," says he, "you are going to be married a week from next pay day. I've fixed it all up for you. Afterward you can have that house with the new furniture by the coulée."

Of course Boulé wasn't satisfied. If we'd wanted to give him a million dollars he'd found some reason for not takin' it.

"Me, I don't know—" he begins.

"But I do," barks the Major. "You'll get married a week from next pay day, do you hear me? Those are my orders. Now clear out and do what I tell you."

Boulé didn't waste any time in leavin'. Although I'm not a marryin' man, I think I'd done the same myself.

After he'd gone the Major looked at me with somethin' that was almost like a sure enough smile.

"Humh!" says he. "I never thought I'd live to be a matchmaker, Mr. Wilson. But that's what you get for trying to run a plantation."

VI

I RECKON there'd been many a weddin' among the hands at Auburn. And I reckon that ten minutes would about cover any and all time the Major had wasted on the lot. But he sure made up for 'em with this one of Boulé's.

But it was his own special plan, and he still had considerable steam to let off. He got rid of most of it in the week that followed.

He begun by announcin' the business the day Boulé left. He wanted to give it time to get round, but he needn't have worried. In less than a day it was all over Fausse Point.

After that come the arrangements. As his plan called for a free-for-all with every one invited, the Major done the thing up right. Luckily we'd built a new barn that fall, and he had it cleared and decorated with moss and cypress and such. Then he ordered a regular old-fashioned barbecue, givin' a calf and some hogs from his stock. Of course, the Cajuns would have rather had their usual gumbo and coffee, but that didn't bother the Major. It was his weddin', and that settled it.

But chief of all was the little private arrangements the Major made on the side. He had a stand of Winchesters left over from the "Regulator" days, and he served 'em out to such able-bodied white men as we had on the place. All in all they come to a dozen or so. Each man had his station at the barn and, if necessary, the Major was to lead 'em with me as a sort of second in command. I wasn't any too sure of what would happen in case of trouble, but I figured we had the best of it. The other side would be Cajun all the way round.

The Major was almost cheerful. His one worry was that Cola would lose his nerve.

"All I ask is for him to come in," says he. "If he does and if I don't fit Fausse Point out with a dozen Cajun funerals, you can have Auburn as a gift, Mr. Wilson."

The weddin' day broke clear and cool. We'd fixed the ceremony for noon, but by nine o'clock the folks begun ridin' in. After that we give up any attempt at regular work. All the white hands was gathered at the barn. Those of the black ones that wasn't busy with the barbecue was hangin' round watchin' the fun.

It looked like a big day for Auburn. So far as I could see there was only one spot in the sky. This was that Boulé hadn't showed up. He'd been due the night before, but that didn't mean anything. It would be like him to drift in at the last minute. Just the same I was worried. When 10:30 come and no Boulé, I rode up to the big house.

Outside the office the Major's horse was waitin' with a Winchester stuck under the saddle flap. Inside the old man was pretendin' to go over his books. Bein' who he was, I knew he'd stick it out till just before noon. That was another thing he got for tryin' to run a plantation.

"Well?" he asks, swingin' round in his chair. "Is everything prepared?"

"Yes, sir," says I. "We're all set and ready except for the groom."

The Major rose up like he'd been worked with a spring.

"What?" he shouts. "Do you mean to say that that Cajun is trying to lay down on us?"

"That's what I'm wonderin'," says I. "Anyway one thing is certain, he ain't here at Auburn."

"Well he isn't at St. Martin, either," growls the Major. "I'll swear to that. I've made sure by telephone that they sent him back yesterday. I suppose he's in town at some coffee-house. We'll just have to get him, that's all."

Reachin' for his hat, the Major went out to his horse. Five minutes later he had hold of Durand, our stableman, and was flingin' orders at him like a handful of shot.

"Go to town and find Boulé," says he. "Take as many men as you need, but get him and get him quick. And once you have him, don't leave him for a minute until you turn him over to me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, m'sieu," says Durand. "And if I can not find him?"

"You will," snaps the Major. "Otherwise you'd better not come back."

After Durand had gone the Major kept to his saddle. He said we might as well make the rounds, but I noticed that he never got out of sight of the road.

At 11:30 one of the hands rode up and reported that Cola and his gang was waitin' just outside the big gate. Foreseein' this, the Major had sent his surrey for the bride with orders to slip her in through the back way. But somehow he didn't seem to get any satisfaction out of foolin' Cola. Just then I believe he'd forgotten all about him. He was too busy cuttin' his Cajun funerals to one, with Boulé as the corpse.

The bride come in with the priest and her father promptly at noon. After she'd heard the news and waited ten minutes, she sent up word that she'd wait exactly ten more before startin' back home.

Most men would have quit and called it a day. But not the Major. For the past half hour he'd sat like an image followin' the time. Now he snapped shut his watch and swung round on me.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "I'm going back to talk to that girl. She'll give me an hour or I'll know the reason why. In the meanwhile you go after that Cajun. You have just sixty minutes to bring him back in. If you don't do it, I'd advise you to keep Durand company in town."

I didn't try to answer him. There wasn't anything to say. As he'd told me, I'd started the business. And now it was up to me to finish it or let it finish me.

So I grabbed my quirt and was startin' off when a disturbance broke out at the big gate. All the Fondiables was yellin' and pointin', and I could see a fresh bunch of men headin' in from the parish road.

The Major's face lit up for the first time that mornin'.

"Just a moment," says he. "I believe they are getting ready to come in."

But a second later the crowd opened out and a jumper drove through the gate. In it was a man and a woman. I give 'em a look and begun to breathe easy again.

"It's all right, sir," says I. "It's Boulé. Durand and the rest are just behind him."

"Humh!" says the Major. "And who is the woman?"

"I don't know, sir," says I. But already I was afraid I did. I begun to wish I'd kept on to town.

I'll never forget Boulé as he drove down that plantation road. He was dressed to kill, and he had the kind of satisfied look on his face a man wears when he'd done a mean job well. Every now and then he'd look at the woman and smile harder than ever. It was like the Major had sent him down in the field to shake hands with a bear, and he'd come back with the bear over his shoulder. When he finally reached us he pulled up and sat back with his grin all but splittin' his face in two.

"M'sieu," says he, "I am here."

It was a second or so before the Major could speak at all.

"So I notice," says he. "And now, Boulé, if you have any real reasons for not being here before, I'd advise you not to waste any time in giving them."

Boulé grinned harder than ever.

"It is that old priest," says he. "He has all those arrangements. He would not marry me before they were done."

I thought the Major would fall off his horse.

"Marry you?" he snorts.

"But yes," says Boulé. "It was your order. You say, 'Boulé, you will marry one week from next pay day. Then you can have that house and the furniture by the coulée."

It was the first and last time I ever heard the Major stutter.

"But—but—your girl—Manon Breaux?" he begins.

Boulé threw out his hands.

"Ah, that Manon," he shrugs. "She is too much trouble. Me, I get me a new girl *là bas*."

The Major was game. Once he had it he didn't hesitate. He just put spurs to his horse and went off up the road without another word. At the big gate he called to the crowd that was jabberin' away on the other side.

"Vedrine," he asks, "do you want to marry that girl?"

Cola pushed forward, but he wasn't takin' any chances. He eyed the old man for a moment, with his hand all ready at his hip.

"That is what I am here for," says he."

"All right," says the Major. "She's yours if she'll have you. Come in, all of you. You'll find everything ready down the road."

Cola didn't wait for any more. He rode right through and, as he reached the Major, he raised one hand in a sort of salute.

"M'sieu," says he, "you are a man. If ever I can do anything for you—"

"You can," says the Major. "Just keep on going. Perhaps, if you hurry up, I can get this thing over before I give out of grooms entirely."

He waited till the last man had filed through the gate and then, as he watched 'em, his face begun to work in a curious sort of way.

"Now," thinks I, "he's goin' to have a fit."

But a second later his mouth cracked open and he begun to laugh.

It wasn't much of a laugh at first. It was so thin and tight it made me think of ice breakin' up after a long, hard winter. But once it had started and was goin' good, I kind of filled in and rounded out till it made me join in.

After a little the Major eased down to where he could talk.

"It is funny, Mr. Wilson," says he. "It has to be. It's either that or murder. Now go in and keep an eye on things. I don't look for any trouble, but you'd better be on hand."

"Yes, sir," says I. "Anything else?"

"Not that I can think of," answers the Major. "As I see it, this business comes under the head of what the insurance companies call a total loss."

But I wasn't so sure. Somehow it looked to me as if we'd made a pretty good gain all round. Anyway, Boulé was settled down, Cola had a wife who'd probably make a man of him and, unless I was mistaken, I'd have a different boss to work under from now on. As for the Major—well, I noticed that his shoulders was shakin' again as he rode off across the field.

The Soronho Diamonds

A Complete Novelette

By

H. Bedford-Jones

Author of "The White-Tailed Dragon," "Brown Kurnveal," etc.

THEY hung in a little canvas bag down inside the dingy cotton shirt of Ernest Joao da Soronho, so he could feel them against the swelling muscles of his chest. Soronho alone could have told how he slipped out with the stones from east of Kimberley. That in itself was a miracle, for the de Beers control over its treasures is one of the most perfect systems ever devised by man. If you ask about illicit diamond buying in South Africa, they will tell you it is a thing of the far past, dead as Kruger, as ancient a historical fact as the Jameson raid, and quite impossible today.

Nonetheless, impossibilities happen.

Soronho had hunted, traded, worked for years when the great chance of the stones came his way, and he took the chance because of Ysabel, his wife, whom he loved. All the pitiful hardness of life had she shared with him, starving, scraping, laboring for years, never failing, ever patient; and here came the chance to secure her comfort. Soronho took it. What man would not for stones worth a quarter of a million sterling, if the cutting only bore out the promise of the raw, soapy-feeling pebbles?

Knowing Kimberley was no place for them, and if he made for Capetown or Port Elizabeth or Durban he could never hope to get aboard a Castle boat, he headed away east. Beyond Pretoria he dropped off the mail-train with Ysabel and Bwene, the Matabele boy who had followed them during all the years, ever since their marriage, growing old along with them under the whip of mischance and ill fortune. Soronho aimed at Delagoa, whence one might get away east and be altogether lost until the stones had found their market. All this, then, for Ysabel.

The three slipped over the border one night—easy enough if one has been there before and knows how the chances run—and reappeared at the Mission San José which sits up above Lourenço Marques, just to the north of the main line in from Pretoria. They arrived as Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins with native servant; all their papers were quite in order. Soronho had planned for that.

Now came the cruelty of fate, for here in the safety of the Mission San José, Ysabel died of blackwater fever. They buried her in midmorning.

All this is preliminary to what transpired in and about Lourenço Marques. Soronho stood over the newly made grave with the grief-stricken Bwene crouched at his side, and something died within the white man in this moment. For a space he was minded to take the little bag hanging against his chest and, crossing the line of rail, fling it out into the waters of the Espirito Santo, as the Portuguese call the river on which their town stands guard. Without Ysabel, he had need of nothing save the need of death, the need coming when life ceases to hold brightness.

Afterward Soronho went walking, careless of all things. He walked out past D'Languene, and came to the flattened height northeastward of the town where one may look out and see the south point of Xefina Grande across the muddied waters of the estuary. He sat there, looking out with unseeing eyes, and Bwene squatted, unheeded, beside him. He had no thought for the boy, no thought for himself, for food or for life.

So there came up from the direction of Lourenço Marques a little brown-faced, white-clad figure, a rat of a man with inquisitive eyes and pointed nose, a peaked, out-thrust chin, a figure of low comedy when set beside the giant, powerful gauntness of Soronho. He came directly to where the stricken man sat. Soronho gazed blankly at him from deep-set eyes over hollow cheeks, eyes blazing fury at this interrupter of such an hour.

"Senhor Hawkins," said the little man half in assertion, half in question.

Soronho recognized the red-tape merchant who had taken down the facts of Ysabel's death for official record, and nodded response.

The little man dropped down beside Soronho. Very much at ease, he produced a bag of Magaliesburg tobacco and a cigaret paper. Now Magaliesburg is sheer dust, fitted only for pipe smoking if one can get no other, yet the little man rolled and lighted his cigaret, and made naught of the conjuring feat.

"Hawkins, if you will," he went on, speaking in Portuguese, "for that is all one to me. But, senhor, it is not under that name the British authorities will seek your extradition within twenty-four hours."

Soronho sat up. The mingled anger and despair of his countenance gave place to a certain scornful interest. This quickened. Ysabel's going had left him nothing on earth save the fighting instinct. One perceived at a glance that this man was a born fighter. And here was the beginning of a fight for the bag at his chest.

"Extradition is a slow and tiresome process, senhor—"

His voice made a question of the prefix, a question to which the little man made swift response.

"Caceres, senhor, Caceres of the *gendarmerie*, attached temporarily to the *douane* for duty. It is, senhor—Hawkins—" and he paused oddly before the name—"a slow and tiresome process, as you rightly say. Men have at times died of fever in this hole—" and he jerked thumb over shoulder toward the town—"while they sat awaiting extradition. Our jail is none too healthy sometimes. But, senhor, all this trouble and delay and possible danger of fever may readily be averted at a slight price."

"And the price," asked Soronho with a deepening of his scorn.

The other blew thin smoke skyward.

"Let us say two-thirds of the diamonds that came out of English territory so short a time ago. For with one-third remaining to him, a man may be rich for life. But being extradited, he will curse the sun in Capetown. There is no harder task in the world than that of building the Capetown breakwater, senhor."

Now, Bwene did not understand Portuguese, but at Soronho's laugh he cocked his ears. If Soronho had laughed in any ordinary way, so soon after Ysabel's burial, Bwene would have considered himself drunk or hearing amiss, but this laugh he knew. It preceded fighting, and the boy cocked his ears and wrinkled the grayish wool on his skull and grinned, wishing that he understood the talk.

"State the case, Senhor Caceres," said Soronho, or Hawkins.

He spoke Portuguese in a manner that justified his own name, English in a manner to justify his assumed name. His mother, an American, had married a Soronho in the days when the Soronhos were diplomats, before evil fortune fell upon their house and kings were driven from Portugal.

Caceres adroitly performed another miracle with dry tobacco powder and a cigaret paper, lighted the result and blew smoke out toward Xefina Grande, drowsing in the hot white sunlight.

"A certain number of stones, very fine stones indeed, have been missed," he stated complacently. "There was a Basuto boy, and he too is missed. And there was a man with a Portuguese name, Soronho. The Basuto boy is out of it and does not matter. There was another, this one a Matabele, one named Bwene, with grayish hair and a scar on his chin."

Caceres puffed and blew another thin stream of smoke, and resumed:

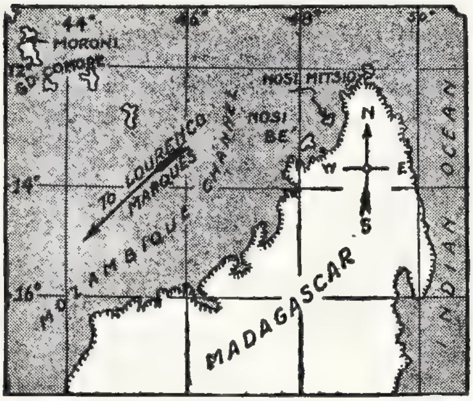
"This Soronho was a gauntly big man, senhor, with deep-set eyes in a thin and most eager face, and the hooked nose of an eagle. He disappeared from Kimberley with his wife, who was named Ysabel. The wires have been very busy, Senhor—Hawkins." And again that odd little pause, most significant. "Tomorrow information will be laid against a man who has lately come to this city with excellent papers. Indeed, excellent papers! That is, unless—"

He paused.

"Unless," echoed Soronho. "Unless?"

The word sounded like stone grating against stone. Bwene, who had pricked up his ears at mention of his own name, started slightly. The tone of Soronho was a fighting call.

"Two-thirds, senhor," said Caceres blandly. "I am but one. There are more than one to keep silence here. There is the *jefe*, whom I obey. Then there is Senhor Matado, my immediate superior. And again, certain others of the service."



Again a significant pause, as if now Caceres regretted having given away so much information. It was excellently done, delicately done.

"Two-thirds, eh?" mused Soronho.

"So, senhor. Rather than all. It is much better so than to have all go back to de Beers at Kimberley. It is better so than for a certain Soronho to sweat on Capetown breakwater. A fair proposal indeed, eh, senhor?"

He smiled as he spoke, and indolently dropped the butt of his second cigaret. Then he performed his miracle a third time; he was perhaps a little nervous, for he spilled some of the brown dust. He lighted the cigaret. Soronho sat unmoving, unspeaking, unseeing.

"A fair proposal," he repeated lest the gaunt man should not have heard the question. "Eh, senhor?"

Now Soronho stood up. He still stared out toward Zefina Grande, slumbering like a gigantic, overgown whale above the still waters where shoals stood out gray and brown against the deeper blue of the channels. Bwene likewise stood up, gazing earnestly yet not anxiously at his master. He loved this white man second only to the woman they had that same morning seen laid under earth. Caceres also stood up and brushed bits of grass from his semi-uniform whites that had been so clean and natty once. A long time since.

"Caceres," said Soronho slowly, steadily, those deep eyes of his swinging around to rest upon the smaller man, "you may return to the *jefe*, whom you obey, and to Matado, your immediate superior, and to certain others of the service. Return. Say to them that there never were any stones, there never was any man named Soronho and there never was any such thing as extradition. It is all a dream, Senhor Caceres. I, Senhor Hawkins, advise you to eat more wisely and to drink less, for such dreams are dangerous and may come to violent endings. Dream no more."

Now the little man stared up at the giant, incredulous. No man in his senses would dare to defy all the gang whose activities perverted law in Lourenço Marques. Obviously, this gaunt man must be ignorant of the forces he defied.

"But, senhor!" he began, his voice almost pleading.

Instead of listening, Soronho turned to the Matabele and spoke in English.

"Bwene, if I speak twice more to this dog, kick him hence for me. Once more let me speak to him, but twice, no! I would not trust my own hands on him."

Caceres waited hopefully, trying to get the gist of what passed here between master and man. Soronho regarded him with disdainful scorn, did not address him, but made a curt gesture as if bidding him begone.

"But, senhor!" said Caceres again.

He had somewhat the air of a hungry mongrel who sees a visioned meal becoming unattainable.

"Back to the *jefe* and Matado and all the rest!" leaped out the voice of Soronho. "If it is a fight, then it is a fight—that suits me. But there are no diamonds. All that is a dream. Depart!"

Caceres looked at Bwene, and suddenly comprehended why the boy bore a certain air of eagerness. He looked back at Soronho and opened his mouth to speak, then shut it again swiftly under the burning regard of those deep eyes. Then, without a word more, he turned away and began his walk toward town.

"Baas," said Bwene, gazing after the little man with mournful eyes, "why you no speak to him the second time?"

Soronho roused himself from his preoccupation.

"Let us, too, go down," he said quietly. "It seems that I am not yet ready to die. There are jackals to be cheated."

"And the baas is a lion, that is true," agreed Bwene.

They followed Caceres.

II

BETWEEN the church and the *douane*, or customs, and almost within touch of the quays, there lay an eating and drinking establishment neither cool nor nice. Here Soronho got himself a scrappy meal. He had no interest whatever in the food. He ate merely because he must if he were to win this fight against the gang of official thieves. He had no illusions. The man Caceres had been an emissary, not speaking for himself at all, but for others who stood hidden.

So the gaunt man dropped in at this place as being the first available, inconspicuous enough even for him. He ate mechanically and, having eaten, sat lost in thought while voices hummed stridently all around. Here were flies. Here was a greasy half-breed behind the long counter, busily dispensing drinks to men of many nations. Here were seamen from tramps and liners, for a Castle boat lay out in the channel, and here was all the nondescript jetsam to be found eddying through and around any such port. The place made no distinctions as to color. A tall Arab violated all the laws of his faith by guzzling wine, while infidels sat eating at his table.

At the table next Soronho sat three Chinamen. One of them, to judge from his black silk brocade coat, was a man of some substance. These three yellow men talked in French, a language as familiar to Soronho as English or Portuguese or Matabele. He heard the prosperous individual addressed as Sin Tock Lui, and gathered that all three were traders from the Comoro Islands, the French possessions lying out in the Mozambique channel. Then the name of Matado, followed by that of Caceres, caught his ear. The Chinese, however, observed how the gaunt white man, sitting alone, had heard something of interest. They straightway changed their conversation to low-spoken Chinese, so that Soronho's thoughts drifted away.

Without effort, he absorbed the chatter all about. First one pair of voices would rise to eager prominence above the babel, then another pair, like speakers coming down to the front of a stage. Soronho took little interest in anything that was uttered, except for the yellow trader who had mentioned Matado and Caceres, and this might mean nothing. Then, abruptly, he was jarred into coherent thought.

At a table to his left sat a half-drunken Scot just down from the Somali coast. He was telling his companion, a Devonshire man, about the exploits of some gun-runner up that way, and suddenly he mentioned the name. Murray. Murray of the *Firefly*.

A gleam darted into the deep eyes of Soronho. Murray! There was the one man who could have saved him. Murray would dare the devil. He knew Hamilton Murray of old—a quiet man, ever well poised, who played the game for the game's sake against long odds. Ah, if only Murray were here now! With such a man as this nothing would be impossible. But Murray was up on the Somali coast, filibustering. Hopeless to wish and spend vain effort in surmise of what might be. Ysabel was dead.

Soronho fell into his own bitter reflections. Now that Caceres had stated knowledge of those missing diamonds and of Soronho, Lourenço Marques became something like a mouse-trap—easy enough to get in, with the getting out a problem to puzzle any man. There was the line to Pretoria, as surely closed to him as if it did not exist; there were the ships in harbor, and he knew no man aboard any of them; there was the Tembe River and the hinterland, all unknown country to him, with every district under watch by those who sought the stones. He had but one advantage, one slender thread of hope. Caceres, confessedly a minor official, represented those higher up who wanted to delay arrest and extradition for the sake of getting their own fingers on the diamonds.

Had these men been honestly serving the law, then Soronho would be beyond all chance of salvation. Since they planned graft, and would resort to straight dealing only when the stones were out of their reach, they were forced to work secretly. Capture, torture to make him confess where the diamonds were hidden—such things were not only possible, he knew, but entirely probable. He felt the little bag against his chest muscles as he sat there and questioned how he was to get away from Lourenço Marques.

The half-drunken Scot rose to leave, and passed by the table where sat the three yellow men. As he went by, the black brocaded silk robes of Sin Tock Lui attracted his attention. He called the notice of the Devon man to the pattern. It was like a cushion cover he had sent "hame to Jeanie." The Devon man became interested. The Scot, to mark his point, tapped the robe on the shoulder, regardless of the man inside it.

With incredible rapidity Sin Tock Lui, sliding from his chair, took the Scot by the throat and hurled him against the door. He paused to comment angrily on the indignity of being touched in such fashion when the Devon man caught him on the angle of the chin with a fist like paving stone. Sin Tock explained no further, but collapsed limply across the table. His two companions went for the Devon man, steel flashed, and Soronho wakened to proceedings and came to his feet. It was all swift, swift as the leaping dart of a puff-adder.

A drunken man falls easily. The Scot came back, just as Soronho's six feet of bone and brawn charged in to the rescue of the Devon man. Sin Tock Lui recovered, rolled on the floor and sat up. Soronho lifted one of the other Chinamen bodily and flung him through the doorway into the street. The swing doors gave on the impact. The Devon man reeled away with a knife slash through his upper arm. Sin Tock grasped the Scot above the ankles and swept him to the floor. Then Soronho's fist drove the third Chinaman senseless; leaning over, he caught Sin Tock Lui by the ears, dragged him shrieking to the door, and kicked him into the street.

It was all a matter of a minute or less, for there is little time lost in such things.

By the time the half-breed bartender and two Swahili boys came upon the scene of battle, it was over. The Scot was examining the ragged wound in the arm of the Devon man, while Soronho looked on with calm interest. Sobered, the Scot tried to smooth things over in Cape Dutch. Soronho saved the situation, taking out a handful of coins and suggesting that he be allowed to pay for all damage. His perfect Portuguese and his coins made all serene.

"I canna speak that god-forsaken lingo," grumbled the Scot.

"It is easy," said Soronho. "Easier than English, really."

He flung a few words at the half-breed, completing his task of quieting the man. The Scot bound a handkerchief around the Devon man's arm and departed to get the wound properly dressed at the hospital. In five minutes Soronho found himself alone with a handful of small coins as change from the half-breed, and he too went out into the hot street.

Too late, he realized how this encounter might have meant escape. That Scot probably knew of some way to help him, some way out. Yet, did he want to get out? Soronho smiled a little; he was none so sure. There was a tingle of interest in the thought of contest with Caceres and the gang of officialdom. Otherwise the world was empty enough of interest with Ysabel lying under earth.

Soronho turned down toward the *douane*. From around the first corner came Bwene, walking on the other side of the street until Soronho now beckoned him to cross. He came over slantingly, with glances behind and to either side, and stayed down below the curb, walking level with his master. He spoke softly in Matabele.

"Baas, the little man who talked has set watch. There are three, two behind and one in front, all of his color. The jackals keep on the trail of the lion."

"At the church at sunset," said Soronho curtly.

Bwene faded away without looking at his master. As the Matabele boy departed, Soronho perceived a little man clad in dingy white waken to sudden alertness and follow by the western-going street Bwene took. This left two somewhere among the thronging folk all about. Soronho came to the waterfront, hesitated and aimlessly turned toward Vermelho.

"Senhor," came a voice at his elbow, "the offer is still open. Two-thirds."

He looked down at a small man with bristling mustache, this one immaculately clad and wearing an air of officialdom which could not be mistaken.

"Senhor Matado?" he hazarded, and the bolt went home.

The other bowed bland assent.

"The offer," he repeated in silken tones, "is still open, my dear senhor."

"My dear Senhor Matado," returned Soronho very pleasantly, "may I recommend that you go your chosen way to ——?"

These were, he comprehended, the mere preliminaries of the fight to come, the delivery of ultimatums, collection of munitions and calling out of reserves. This, he gathered, would be the final ultimatum. Some one higher up than Matado was directing the fight, but the gentleman would not appear at so early a stage. There would be no further parley. He smiled as he saw Matado's expression change from blank astonishment to gathering rage.

"Senhor, you know not what you say—"

Soronho turned suddenly, abruptly, and the man ran like a hare in fright, heading back toward the *douane*. Soronho laughed. Nonetheless, he did not deceive himself. He had declared war, and now he must reckon on fighting. So much the better, he thought.

It was mid-afternoon. Bwene would be waiting at the church at sunset. Meantime, Soronho was very sleepy, for he had not slept at all the preceding night. The preceding night! Was it so short a time since Ysabel had whispered her farewell to him, so short a time since— The awful throb of dull anguish terrified him.

Soronho turned back abruptly and let the city envelop him. He did not want companions, yet he felt a sore need of human presence about him, the sense of human life around. So, heedless of Matado or Caceres or what they represented, he mixed in with Arab and French, Swahili and Portuguese and English, high-heeled woman and slant-eyed boy—all the wash and eddy of the port. So, unthinking, he came to the house of Enriquez Martinez.

The sign in front said that the place was a hotel, and Soronho needed no telling as to what that word conveyed. He went within and came to a narrow passage. Here a fat, oily-looking woman obstructed his entry and glanced past him as if expecting some one else. Soronho shook his head.

"I am alone, senhora," he said in what was obviously her language, so that she looked at his gaunt height in astonishment to hear such words from such a man. "I would be alone. I must have sleep for three hours and some one to waken me in time for a tryst at sunset."

"Ah ha!" returned the fat woman, staring. "Perhaps the senhor will first come to the salon?"

"I said that for three hours I must sleep," repeated Soronho, a trifle of irritation showing in his voice.

"Here?" she queried unbelievingly and unwillingly.

"Here," Soronho echoed. "There are certain ones who seek, and they must not find. And who would seek in such a place as this?"

The obvious scorn in his voice left her unmoved. She reached out her hand in a gesture wholly mechanical. What Soronho placed in that hand resolved all her doubts. She nodded and led him along the passage to the back, ushering him into a dim, cool room at the far side of a square patio where the door was shaded by a giant ceiba tree, and a pool of water beneath the tree bred mosquitoes blithely.

"In three hours, senhora, you yourself will call me," he said with emphasis.

"I myself will call you, senhor," she responded.

He entered, let down the *tatti* in front of the doorway, and with a sigh of despondent weariness turned to the ornate bed. Assuring himself that his automatic pistol was loaded and ready, he lay down with his fingers curved about its butt and slept.

Here was clue to the man's character. Unthreatened, he would have kept wakeful, grieving over Ysabel. Threatened, he slept, that he might have strength for the conflict all too imminent.

III

SORONHO had one failing, or one quality to be accounted a failing just at present. He slept too heavily. On this particular occasion, his sleep ended very suddenly and long before its appointed time. Either the fat woman had betrayed him or else he had been trailed to this place.

The bed on which he lay was directly opposite the doorway with space to either side, the head shoved against the back wall of the room. Soronho wakened with what would have been a start had he been able to move. He was powerless. One man—and this was the yellow man, Sin Tock Lui—gripped and held down his right hand. In sleep he had let go the pistol and flung out his arm; now he paid. Another Chinaman held his left wrist. Caceres and Matado between them prevented any movement of his feet.

They must have crept in and made their attack in perfect concert, for their grip was all that could be desired and more, from Soronho's point of view. To his astonishment, this thin, saturnine Chinaman was possessed of tremendous strength. Soronho realized that, even could he fling off the other three, it would be nearly an even fight with the lean yellow man in the brocaded silk. For the time he made no effort to free himself; he lay motionless.

"A little less pressure on the right leg, Caceres," he said quietly. "You incline to twist the knee."

Caceres grinned malevolently and increased the pressure. Thereupon Soronho suddenly drew up the leg and gave one kick. Caceres went backward, fell stunned against the far wall with a tremendous crash. He took the marble-topped washstand off its legs and spattered burst crockery over the floor. The two yellow men gave short, vicious twists at the arms, and Soronho clenched his teeth to prevent himself shrieking with sudden pain.

"The action was instinctive," he said calmly as soon as he could control his voice. "Apart from it, I surrender for the time. What do you want?"

"The diamonds smuggled out of English territory," responded Sin Tock Lui.

"Ah!" returned Soronho. "I thought it was two-thirds."

The twist upon his arms relaxed a little, and he hoped to spin out time. Sin Tock Lui looked at Matado, who nodded assent.

"Yes, two-thirds."

"Well, gentlemen," said Soronho pleasantly, "it is evident that any affair in which Chinese traders and Portuguese officials collaborate must be well worth while. Therefore I regret sincerely that I can not oblige you in the matter. This is the third time I have heard something about illicit diamonds. I fail to understand why I, a mere geological prospector, should be suspected of possessing them."

Caceres came to his feet. He felt for a clasp knife, drew it out and opened it. Matado, who apparently was in command of the party, dissented curtly. Caceres closed the knife again and came by the bed, standing there malevolently.

"So the senhor is a geological prospector!" exclaimed Matado.

"Precisely," returned Soronho very calmly. "As my papers will tell you—here in my inner coat pocket—my name is Hawkins and I am a geological prospector. I came to Lourenço Marques to await the east coast boat for Mombasa where I have business. My last stopping place was Potchefstroom in the Transvaal. If you require to know more, it is simple."

So perfect was his quiet assurance that it made a momentary impression. Matado looked puzzled, doubtful. Then Caceres broke in with sneering heat.

"Nonsense. The man is Soronho! I have seen the Matabele boy with the grayish hair and the scar. There is no mistake. This man is Soronho."

"Well, senhor, and the diamonds?" Matado asked as one might remark on the weather.

Soronho shrugged, but the gesture failed to register. The two yellow men held him too tightly. Not for one instant did they relax, and he felt himself helpless until their vigilance decreased.

"Your diamonds, —— your diamonds!" he exclaimed in assumed disgust. "I have told you everything. If there is law in Lourenço Marques, I shall have you punished for this assault."

"I am a not inconsiderable part of that law," Matado said with a grin.

"So much the worse for the law," retorted Soronho contemptuously.

At this instant Sin Tock Lui espied the thong about Soronho's neck.

His knee clamped down on the captive wrist. He leaned forward, thrust out his hand and grasped the thong. He pulled into sight the yellow canvas bag at the end of the thong. From Caceres and Matado went up a long-drawn "Ah!" and the latter laughed exultantly.

"No diamonds, senhor, eh?" he mocked.

"When you might have kept a third of them had you been sensible!"

Soronho made no response.

Sin Tock put the bag to his mouth, held it there. His strong white teeth showed as he bit at the thong, unwound its wrappings, loosened it. He held out the bag and poured on the bed beside the prostrate man a little heap of grayish pebbles. Then he paused in stupefaction. He stared at them. The other men, leaning over, stared open-mouthed, upon them a sudden wave of consternation and blank dismay.

They were but pebbles such as one may pick up anywhere on a road or on the open veldt.

"When you have finished, please put them back," said the quiet, calm voice of Soronho. "They are indicative of oil-bearing strata in the Lydenburg district, and are valuable to me. I need them to show in London to support my claim regarding oil being there in paying quantities."

Caceres, hitherto so certain, looked shaken. Matado rapped out an oath. Only the two yellow men retained their grip and their impassive mien.

"You see that, Caceres?" inquired Matado fiercely.

"He has them elsewhere!" Caceres bleated.

He tenderly rubbed a bruised shoulder, and looked his hatred at the prostrate man.

"Now, my dear Senhor Matado," said Soronho pleasantly, speaking as one man to another with perfect composure despite his position, "you may strip me to the skin if you like and search, and you will see for yourself that I know nothing about your diamonds. In fact, I give you my word of honor that there is no diamond on or about me or in this room with the exception of the small stone in the ring I wear. Since that was the possession of my dead wife, I strongly advise you to let it alone. Otherwise I shall certainly kill you. There are no other diamonds."

The force of the man, his quiet strength, his composure were tremendously impressive. Matado looked at Sin Tock Lui and the thin Chinaman returned the look. These were obviously the principals in the affair, Caceres and the other yellow man being accessories. Sin Tock Lui nodded almost imperceptibly and Matado looked distinctly perturbed

"He is not lying," said Sin Tock impassively. "I know."

"No," agreed Matado uneasily. "He is not lying."

"A few days will tell."

Matado nodded agreement and stood back with a gesture of futility.

Momentarily, the yellow man holding Soronho's left arm relaxed his hold. Here was the instant for which the prostrate man had waited. Like a piston rod that left arm drew in and drove out. Struck fairly between the eyes by the shattering blow, the Chinaman went reeling.

Matado was caught in the face by Soronho's foot. He fell backward and carried Caceres with him. Caceres recovered, turned and fled out across the patio and so out of the scene. Free, twisting across the bed and to his feet, Soronho flung himself upon Sin Tock Lui.

Great as was his own strength, the white man knew it for an even fight, as he had foreseen. The two wound about each other. Soronho dragged the yellow man down and they went to the floor with a crash, muscles playing silently, terribly, strength flung against strength. Sin Tock had tricks of which Soronho knew nothing—a cramping, searing grip on the small of the back, eating at body and spirit. Yet, when half a minute had dragged past, Soronho knew that he had the man at his mercy.

THE second Chinaman stood blindly gasping, wiping blood from his eyes, helpless. Matado was a collapsed heap at the doorway, slowly recovering. Then suddenly Sin Tock Lui slid like an eel from the grasp of Soronho. He came erect and darted out to the patio, the others after him.

Soronho leaped up, the blood hot in him, and gave chase. Their shod feet thundered on the boards of the narrow passage through which Soronho had entered the place. He came out after them into the street, but there for a moment the glare of the evening sunlight blinded him insufferably. The men had fled different ways. He stopped, still panting with his efforts, and a voice leaped at him.

"What in ——! Soronho, by all that's holy!"

The sun glare fled. Soronho saw before him, all astare, a lean man of medium size with very brown face and keen gray eyes and a tight, wide mouth. Recognition surged in him.

"Murray! Hamilton Murray!"

"Captain Murray," said the other, grinning. "And I find you coming out of this sort of a house! Ernest, the drinks are on you. What would Ysabel say?"

"Ysabel died last night," said Soronho harshly.

"Forgive me, old friend." Murray put out his hand, took that of Soronho, gripped hard. Sympathy sprang into his eyes. "I didn't know. What's the trouble here, a fight? Two of these little brown —— with their faces altered. Have you been running amuck, old chap?"

"My name is Hawkins," said Soronho. "I—I was thinking of you today, wishing for you. Supposed it was hopeless."

"Hm! So your name is Hawkins, eh?" Murray said.

Soronho nodded.

"I must get my hat. Wait here for me."

He turned and vanished in the hotel, found his hat and returned. He found Murray standing staring thoughtfully up the street. He gave Soronho a flashing smile.

"How long is it, eight years? A long time, a short time. What are years? There was no mistaking that long body of yours and the way you carry yourself. Can't we swap lies over a drink?"

"Lead," said Soronho, his bleakness somewhat melted. "I do not know the place well. It is not safe for me here. Lead."

Murray nodded. Presently they were ensconced in two wicker rockers behind a screen of palm leaves at the edge of the pavement, and a Swahili boy brought tumblers in which ice tinkled deliciously. The incurious populace of Lourenço Marques passed drifting in the afternoon sunlight, and though Soronho could discern no watching eyes, they must be there. His trail would not be lost.

"Yes," ruminated Murray, after their glasses had touched, "must be all of eight years. Over in Lobito Bay. I left you there talking to a fat Portugee. Remember? He had some ice in the construction train saloon. Remember how the long spit goes out there to make the harbor, and you can see the sharks' fins on the other side when you bathe? And the stink of the place! Worse than this."

"I heard of you only today, heard a man speak of you," said Soronho. "Somali coast. Good hunting?"

Murray nodded and remained silent. Between these two was obviously the sort of mutual trust taking no count of years. They had known each other in earlier days, so truly that they could well afford silences.

"And now?" asked Soronho, after another sip at his glass.

Murray lighted a cigaret and made a gesture of indifference. "At loose ends. I've put in here for stores and to kill time. Must pick up a couple of men, too. My crew is Arab, and Ibrahim—you remember old Ibrahim, the Hazrami?—is still with me."

"Then your ship is here?" asked Soronho with interest. "Same old tub of a brig, the *Firefly?*"

Murray shook his head. An American, he had been adventuring in far waters a long time.

"Same name, yes, but a schooner now, a cracking good little craft. Cost me all my spare tin, too. The old brig went smash three years ago in the Loyalties. I was pearling over that way for a change, and got the change. Got the pearls, too. Enough to refit the new *Firefly* with. Picked her up at Singapore."

He paused, gazed off at the street.

"Sometimes I get tired," he said slowly. "Wonder if it was worth while locking up all my money in her. I've had no great luck since, drifting along. It's a knockabout life after all. We're getting old, Ernest. Life's hard."

"It might be harder," said Soronho grimly.

Murray nodded comprehension to that, and both fell silent. Murray had known Ysabel. After a little Soronho stirred and spoke.

"I want you to give me passage, if you will. To Amsterdam or Paris, either one. As soon as I have kept an appointment with Bwene, we can go aboard. You can sign me on or arrange it any way you like."

"Bwene still with you, eh?" Murray smiled, gave him a curious glance. "Hm! Amsterdam or Paris. What d'you think I've got, a liner? A blooming, blasted liner with a Cook's agency aboard? The nerve of you! There's a Castle boat out there now waiting for you!"

"Waiting for me is right." And Soronho's lips curved slightly. "Yes, Amsterdam or else Paris. You'll make by it. I've a package to sell for something like a quarter of a million sterling. Half is yours. Afterward we might drift about together if you like. I have no ties left."

Murray started slightly.

"No ties? But—there was a boy—"

Instantly, as the other man's forehead contracted; he regretted the question. Soronho recovered his composure at once, though his lips tightened for a moment.

"The boy," he said slowly, heavily. "Yes. But that was long ago, long years ago! He was nearly four when we lost him. We left him with a Doctor Carvahal in Maritzburg. We were going over to Port Elizabeth, and Carvahal was a friend of Ysabel's people. I came down with black-water. Later we got a letter saying the boy was ill, and we came back—too late. Old Carvahal had got into whacking big trouble for selling dope or something. He vanished. So did the boy. From that day until yesterday, there was never a sign. It helped to break her heart. It was the worst thing of all. We had no luck, ever."

"Vanished?" queried Murray, incredulous.

Soronho nodded.

"Later, I trailed old Carvahal to Delagoa bay and lost him. I was too short of money, you see. He had kept the boy with him. I was shifting about. He was not sure where to reach me. Oh, —— knows why! It's all past now. I have no interests in life any more. If it hadn't been for the circumstances leading to that fight you saw the end of, I'd probably set out to drink myself to death. Ysabel—"

His lips tightened on the name and he fell silent. Murray sat motionless.

"All past," said Soronho at last. "Wife and child and home—all past. Now, what about this passage to Amsterdam or Paris?"

"Why not go normally?" queried Murray.

Soronho smiled.

"Normally I could never leave this town. The wires are out against me, too. The package I spoke of—de Beers doesn't agree as to ownership."

"Oh!" said Murray amazedly. "That! I'd never have thought it of you of all men!"

Soronho shrugged.

"Why? Scruples?"

"Bah! But you were never that sort—my sort. You say the alarm's out?"

"Yes. These thieves here hope to get the loot from me instead of extraditing me. Else, I'd be sweating in jail now."

Murray nodded. He knew enough of the shady side of colonial life to appreciate the point.

"So long as you hold the stones, you're a free man."

"While they have me under their eye here," amended Soronho.

"Where are they?" demanded Murray abruptly.

Soronho looked at the shadows which began to lie lengthily along the street.

"I gave them to Bwene, luckily. Otherwise, the pack who set on me would have had them. I'm to meet Bwene at the church at sunset."

"Good lot to trust to a Matabele."

"Hm! Would you trust Ibrahim?"

Murray grinned.

"You win! You know your own business. Now, about getting you aboard. Shall I meet Bwene with you?"

Soronho reflected.

"Suppose you meet us there a few moments later," he advised. "I don't want to be seen about with you. They might try to hold your schooner on some pretext. When can you turn loose, clear out?"

"Noon tomorrow," responded Murray with a nod. "Once aboard, I'll take care of you. Ten minutes after sundown then. You can hand the stones over to me tonight, come aboard tomorrow, eh? No one would suspect me of having them."

"Right," agreed Soronho, and on this they parted.

Going out with the tide was a flashing sail, the sail of a trading *dhow*. Sin Tock Lui was going home to the Comores. He had had enough of this business and, being a wise man, knew when to quit.

IV

SORONHO waited in front of the church alone.

Twilight was falling when Murray swung around the corner, whistling cheerily, looking as if bound anywhere but toward the man he was to meet. He had almost passed the spot when he swung completely around so that, had any one been following, he would have had to face him fully. Then he glanced at his friend.

"Trust your boy anywhere, would you?" he observed.

Soronho, puzzled, shook his head.

"You would too. Something's gone wrong. I don't understand."

A tiny native boy came past at a run, saw the two figures by the church, wheeled far to the other side of the street and surveyed them and came sidling back. He looked all the way up the magnificent frame of Soronho.

"Senhor Hawkins?" he said in Portuguese.

He was a half-caste, only partly native. Soronho took a coin from his pocket.

"My name," he said gravely and handed over the silver.

"One boy send me fetch you," announced the urchin. "I come, you go. Behind."

"Start now," said Soronho.

Murray asked a question with his eyes and Soronho nodded. Nothing mattered now.

When the boy had a block the start of them, they moved off after him. He did not look back, but kept a steady pace out to the northward, through the better quarter of town, out toward the dinginess of the native quarter. So on out of town itself, out into the country, where shadows fell upon them as they followed. They drew closer lest they lose him, for the road was well traveled by natives.

Thus following, they came to an open rise. The figure of the child was silhouetted against the last of the afterglow, and dropped from sight. Following, they found ahead of them a group of beehive huts, and the shape of the boy showed before one hut, waiting.

"In there, senhor," he said in a whisper, gesturing to the entrance.

Soronho hesitated, fearing a trap. Murray took him by the arm, with the same suspicion. Then a black face showed at the entrance, the face of Bwene.

"Baas, all is well. I sent him."

Seeing Murray, he paused.

"Speak out," commanded Soronho. "This is Captain Murray. You saw him once, years ago. Why did you not meet me?" His voice took on a sharp ring of annoyance. "Why all this foolery, when you—"

"Baas," returned Bwene apologetically, "I came here. This is Sinkonwela's kraal. Though I am Matabele and Sinkonwela was once the witch-doctor of Cetywayo, yet he and I are of one lodge. He showed me things. I dared not come until you too had seen and heard, baas."

"You fool! Are you drunk?" snapped Soronho.

"No, baas, no!" pleaded the other. "Sinkonwela cast the bones. He showed me in the sand how we came from Kimberley and what took place last night. All he showed me! And when I would have come he bade me stay, saying it was death to meet you, saying I would never have reached the church alive. And that may be truth, baas. Better a live Bwene here than a dead Bwene beside the road."

Bending forward, Soronho read a certain fear in the eyes of the boy. Whatever mummery had gone on, it had been real enough to frighten Bwene. Soronho drew back.

"Where is this witch-doctor, this Sinkonwela?"

A voice boomed in English from within the hut, a deep, mellow voice.

"Enter, white chief! Enter, white chief from the west, and with you the white chief from the sea, he who comes from trading guns, whose ship waits three more tides!"

"Name of the ——!" escaped from Murray.

The face of Bwene had vanished. Soronho took a forward step, hesitated, then bent his gaunt frame double and disappeared through the entrance of the hut. After a momentary pause, Murray followed him. He found himself standing in the dim light of two candles placed on the bare, hard mud floor within.

Upon a stool at the far side sat Sinkonwela. This in itself was worth note, for the men of his race do not as a rule use stools, but squat on their haunches, even to this day. Yet it was not this which drew Murray's stare, for he knew little of the native ways. He stared at a white Zulu, white-skinned, white-haired, white-handed, with blinking pink eyes above the flattened nose and thick lips of his breed. An albino. Bwene crouched to one side.

"*Saku bona*," said the monstrosity.

He gave them no title. The words made merely the Kaffir "good-day," and Soronho resented the familiarity yet found it impossible to express his resentment. He merely nodded in a manner to express contempt for the creature before him. Sinkonwela laughed, a deep bass note of ironic amusement.

"Sit, bearer of diamonds, and you other man from the sea, sit!" he bade, indicating two stools on the right of the doorway. "Bwene told me of you and I cast the bones for him. What the bones said was such that, since Bwene is one with his master, I must tell you also. Not for your sake, since doom sits heavily above you and can not be done away with, but for the sake of Bwene, lest the doom fall upon him also."

"Doom?" echoed Soronho doubtfully.

The witch-doctor had spoken in Zulu, and the word bore other interpretations, according to the inflection used. Murray, knowing nothing of the language, quite unimpressed, sat back on his stool and waited, frowning at the scene.

Sinkonwela made no response to the query. He hitched around a small bag hanging from his shoulders by a rawhide thong. When this was in front of him he dipped into it and brought forth a handful of what seemed brownish dust, in the candle-light. Rising, he sprinkled this dust in a thin, straight line two feet in length, before Soronho. Now Bwene drew an audible gasp of fear, and shrank back as he crouched.

"Patience, brother," said Sinkonwela to him. "I do but set the fire curtain. We have seen it often in the old days before the white man made laws against witch-doctors."

So saying, he knelt and, bending above the line of dust, breathed gently upon it. He shuffled from end to end of the line, thus breathing. Then he rose and returned to his stool. All gazed at the dust. Fascinated, they saw a dull glow show in it and increase. Presently the dust had become a deep red line, as if it were a fire-heated bar of metal lying across the floor in front of Soronho. And now this scarlet lightened and brightened in hue, and from it burst suddenly upward a steady flame, a thin sheet of fire, golden-yellow, gleaming there steadily as a candle gleams, between Sinkonwela and Soronho.

Murray stood up swiftly, lithely, a muttered oath coming from him. Sinkonwela waved a flat palm in the air. It was as if he pressed down on the top of Murray's head, forcing him back on his stool.

"Quiet! It will not harm."

Though Murray could not understand the witch-doctor's words, he comprehended their reassurance and composed himself.

Now in this thin sheet of flame there came a little pattern weaving, a pattern of tiny figures, crossing and moving in varied directions, up to either corner, down to the center, out toward the edges. The confusion of this movement suddenly ceased, became a coherent thing; and before him in the fire Soronho beheld a picture. He saw his own figure standing there, and crouching beside it was a second figure, that of Bwene, and both of them were looking down at earth recently disturbed, the grave of Ysabel.

"So?" said Sinkonwela questioningly, and waved his hand.

Now the flame stood steady, empty of any picture, a shining, impossible curtain before the seated gaunt figure. Murray stared at it incredulously. It was no sort of fire that he knew, for it held no heat, otherwise Soronho could not have sat so close to it. Then abruptly the maze of figures moved in the flame and again settled into stillness. There stood Soronho in the doorway of the Martinez hotel; there stood Murray looking up at him, while the backs of three men running different ways showed small and smaller. This picture was only momentary. Sinkonwela waved his hand, and the flame hung clear.

Soronho glanced around at Murray in a tacit question. Murray nodded.

"I saw it, yes. It's a matter of evoking mental images—what he knows and what we know. It's a —— uncanny thing, but explainable."

"Devils have their uses, white man," said Sinkonwela in English. "I could pull that setting out of your thoughts, with something I do *not* know. Wait!"

HE WAVED his hand and the flame sank until there remained only the faintly glowing powder on the floor. Soronho and Murray sat still, and at one side Bwene breathed long, audible sighs. Then again the flame shot up, but now a picture grew in it almost instantly. A boy, raggedly clothed, leaned over the edge of a boat and gazed downward into clear water, then looked up at a schooner showing small and far off, dimly curtained by shadowy trees.

"The *Firefly* by her rig!" broke from Murray. "And Ibrahim there in the boat—"

"It is not clear to me," said Sinkonwela's booming voice. "I know only that it is of tomorrow, not of today. Bwene's master has no place in it."

"You see it?" said Murray.

"I see it," said Soronho. His voice held a strange note. "Who is that boy?"

"I never saw him," said Murray, straining at the picture in the flames. "But that is my boat, and those are my men."

Astonishment swelled in him, but the picture was gone, changing, melting, and both men stared at it with all their minds concentrated upon it. The dissolving picture became that of Soronho again, lying on the ground, face upward and quite still, while Bwene leaned over him. Then, above and behind Bwene, a hand poised a long knife as if to stab into his back, and they had a sense that the knife moved downward, though whether or no it moved or what hand held it, they could not be certain. Quite suddenly all was blotted out. There was no curtain of fire, no powder on the floor, nothing but a glastly white albino who sat on a stool against the back of the hut and blinked at them, while Bwene shrank against the reed wall and his teeth chattered on the silence.

"That also is of tomorrow," Sinkonwela said gravely, "and yet it is not finished, not finished! My spirit may write what it sees, but no man may see all. The Queen of Heaven, she who rules the spirits of the Amazulu, never gives me sight of all. There may be a path that leads not this way, but in other ways, though when I cast the bones they also gave this way. Yet, being warned—"

"Warned?" asked Soronho sharply. "How warned, then?"

The witch-doctor shook his head as if in sad negation.

"How am I to say? I have told all that I see," he made answer, "except this. You three must not go forth of this kraal together. Six men wait in the night. You three must fetch a compass toward Vermelho and so go back, but by one and one. Fail in this, and of the three only one will come to the waterfront, and that one neither Bwene nor his master. Now go. I am old. I have seen men and things, but I have never seen the pebbles of Kimberley bring happiness to any man who sought them for himself. Go."

Murray rose, nothing loath, as did Soronho. The latter, however, paused and then turned again to face Sinkonwela.

"Wizard," he asked in the Zulu tongue, "tell me what mean these pictures."

The white Zulu was sitting with bowed head, and so he continued to sit through a long half minute as if he had not heard. When he looked up, his pink eyes glinted angrily.

"There are many ways that lead to the grave," he said. "All ways lead to the grave, yet there is ever one way leading beyond the grave if we could find it. Certain things have been. Of what use is it to show the past? Of the future, how can we tell? One way alone leads to that place where you lie stilled, and Bwene, who is of my own house, comes into danger from the knife. There are other ways, perhaps."

"And how shall we know them?" insisted Soronho.

Sinkonwela made a slight movement of impatience, not a shrug, but a twisting motion as if he would shake off such questions.

"How shall I tell that?" he answered. "I have shown what has been and what may be, yet the future is in no way fixed. It is like water under the wind, and bends according as man's will strikes or shrinks. If Bwene had gone to that meeting with you, neither of you had seen another dawn. Setting foot in your footprints and his, and not a pace behind, walks death."

"So he walks behind all men," responded Soronho gravely, "day and night. Nor do I greatly care when his footstep overlaps my own."

"Nor I. But Bwene cares for you, and I for Bwene. Now go, for I am an old man and very weary."

All this, being in Zulu, left Murray unenlightened. He emerged from the hut, and Soronho followed him, and stood for a moment staring up at the stars. Then Soronho repeated what had just been said.

"I don't understand it at all," he said wearily, "but I am like that creature. I am an old man and tired, very tired. It is true that diamonds bring happiness to none who seeks them for his own advantage. True of all wealth. I think they have brought a curse upon me."

The deep gravity of his voice impressed Murray.

"Good lord, man!" he broke out impatiently. "You don't attach any importance to this old trickster's mummery, do you? If he had given us any line of travel, but he didn't. His vague and useless chicanery was probably meant to save Bwene's face."

Soronho shook his head.

"Chicanery? Perhaps, perhaps not. If we could understand everything in the universe, my friend, would we have need of religion or God or faith or science? No. Only God is perfect comprehension. I would give this bag of stones to know the meaning of the sea picture, the ragged boy in the boat, peering into the water! I would give the rest of my life!"

"Eh?" Murray was startled by the poignantly earnest tone. "You think—you think it had something to do with the boy you lost?"

Soronho threw out his hands helplessly.

"How should I know? He himself did not know, I think. No, no, there is the mystery of service—the thing toward which our lives tend, as tends the life of the animal who dies to serve our hunger and need of garments. Bah! If I die, I die, and there remains a fight at least! We do not return together. Respect his warning. Can you find your way?"

"Yes," said Murray uneasily. "But see here, old chap, don't be a fool! Separate if you like, but come aboard with me tonight. And you're going to hand over those stones, you know."

"I know nothing," returned Soronho in a grim voice, "except that there is no great luck in me. If I go aboard you tonight, it will be known. You'll be searched in the morning or held up on some pretext."

"Come aboard," urged Murray a little angrily. "Do you think I give a continental —— about these blighters? I don't need their cursed clearance papers—I have forged ones to use. I'll run you out of the harbor in spite of all their —— forts and laws! You're going aboard and you're going now."

"But you're not ready for sea!"

"Ready be hanged! I can provision and water anywhere, at the Comoros. Come on and we'll go—go—oh, the ——!"

His voice fell silent.

"What is it?" asked Soronho.

"I forgot something," said Murray in a choked and terrible voice. "I sent my boat back, said I'd come out by a shore boat. In any event, we couldn't slip out of the harbor before the tide turns. That's two o'clock. Wait. I must think it out."

"Think it out on your way to town," said Soronho quietly. "Meet me, say, in front of the church. Get hold of a boat first. I'll find out if I'm followed."

"Right. My mate may be ashore. I'll look about for him. It's early evening. And turn over those stones, so they'll be safe."

"No, not the stones," answered Soronho. "There's a curse on them. I'll carry my own load, bring them when I come. If anything happens to me, they're yours. You shan't take them, run the risk. I won't have it."

The finality in his voice put the matter beyond question. Murray shrugged in the darkness and refused to press the point. He realized that Soronho was hard hit, had suffered somehow in seeing those pictures, chiefly the one showing the ragged boy. Soronho no doubt thought it had some connection with that lost child of his. Murray cursed the witch-doctor heartily if inaudibly.

"Nonsense! We'll share out the stones in Amsterdam," he said, "if you like to have it so. Before the church, then. Shall I go first?"

"Yes."

"Good luck, old chap!"

Murray put out his hand and Soronho gripped it. Then he was gone, striding away into the night.

Sorono felt, rather than saw, the figure of Bwene creep to his side, and watched the swinging figure of Murray vanish toward the lights of the town.

"Come," he said. "Lead me by another way, circling."

"Yes, baas."

Soronho followed the Matabele.

V

SORONHO knew, as he strode toward town, following the noiseless figure of Bwene, that nothing mattered to him now. He cared less than nothing about the diamonds for themselves, but the instinct for fight was roused full strength in him; it was the sole remaining thing in his spirit. He would make certain of them in order to cheat these thieves of officials.

He realized perfectly the predicament in which Murray found himself, by reason of having no boat ashore. It was a good way out to the anchorage of the schooner. Soronho was certainly being followed, as the witch-doctor had given warning. If he went out to the schooner in a hired boat, the authorities would be informed straightway, and Murray could not get out of harbor before two in the morning. Before then he would be nabbed, boarded and searched by armed launches. No. Soronho knew that he could not go aboard much before two o'clock, if only for Murray's sake. And meanwhile the diamonds.

When the scattered lights of the outspread town loomed close, Soronho halted. No longer hearing the steps behind, Bwene crept back.

"Bwene, you heard what Sinkonwela said?'

"All, baas," responded the boy very sorrowfully. "You go. There is no longer any place for me at your side."

"All things end, Bwene."

"So, baas. The stone rolls down the side of the *kloof*, but is still at last. The stream runs down to the big river and is at peace. The flowers die, and the mealies are gathered, and in a day when he laughs and thinks what he will do on the morrow, man dies. All things end, baas."

"You would come with me, Bwene?"

Soronho felt, rather than saw, the boy's reluctant dissent.

"There is no place," answered Bwene slowly after a moment. "White man to white man and black to black. I will go back to my people, to my own kraal, and buy me two wives, and thrash them daily, baas. It is the way of things."

Soronho restrained a desire to smile. Bwene saw nothing in this expressed intent at all incongruous with his regret.

"Go back to the kraal of Sinkonwela," said Soronho quietly. "There bake three loaves of bread. On one loaf mark a cross. And in that loaf, before it is baked, put the package of diamonds. The baking will hide the cut. Come with the three loaves to the waterfront where the boats land from the ships at the landing stairs. Come at one o'clock in the morning and wait. I will go in Captain Murray's boat between one and two."

"Yes, baas," said Bwene dutifully. "And this Baas Murray—"

"Should be to you as I am. I have told him that if any more ill luck comes my way, as Sinkonwela seemed to foretell, then the diamonds are to be his. Remember it! So much do I think of him."

Bwene considered it.

"He must be a great chief, baas."

"He is not great, but he is a good chief," said Soronho. "Now leave me here and go back to the kraal, and we shall meet for the last time at the landing place of boats. We have seen many things together, Bwene, and wherever I go you will remain in my mind. But, since she has passed—"

"I know, baas," responded Bwene. "I should be always as a canker in the mouth to remind you of what had been. So I will go back to my own kraal and thrash two wives, perhaps three, thanks to you, baas. I shall not be a poor man, baas."

In the darkness, Soronho reached out and grasped the hand of the faithful boy.

"I bid you good-by now, Bwene. Think of me sometimes."

Soronho felt the touch of lips on his hand and the touch of hot, silent tears. So he turned away in silence to go down again into Lourenço Marques.

Try as he would, Soronho could detect no pursuers on his trail, but felt he must make certain. The thought strongest in his mind was to bring no peril upon Murray, the man ready to befriend him. It was not for any share of the stones, as he knew well, that Murray planned to get him away.

Hunger grew upon him. He had not eaten since noon. He could not go back to the mission where Ysabel had died, even though that would be safe enough. He must eat, and he must make certain whether he was being followed. He could kill both birds with one stone, then, and go on to his meeting with Murray. It would take Murray longer to get to the church.

The hour was early yet, and the town was in full blast when Soronho reentered its lighted streets. Stocky little Portuguese in uniform and out mingled with brown Sakalavas from the Madagascar coast, draped Swahili, deadbeats from the Transvaal and the south, Hindu traders, seamen of white and colored races. Rickshaws and flivvers dotted the streets, filled the night with blaring horns or stentorian cries.

A man sidled up with a half whispered invitation and shrank blasted from Soronho's curses. Women eyed him, a policeman took note of his gaunt height. He realized that here among the lesser races he was too conspicuous. He turned aside to a small street and halted at a shaded pavement café, to sit down and order a drink in one corner where he would not be noted.

The place was empty, and it was not in a good neighborhood. Soronho lighted a cigaret and sat over his drink, having ordered food prepared, and was immersed in his own thoughts. A couple of Portuguese sauntered in and took a table. Presently a second pair appeared, and at this Soronho began to take note of things. He looked up the street, and was aware of a group standing there, a group of uniformed men. He glanced the other way, frowning, and saw the figure of Caceres with several more.

So, then, they had him!

Almost at once, four other men came into the place and occupied the rear. Soronho smiled grimly. Escape was being cut off in that direction. Front and back, the street in both ways. They were neglecting nothing. Well, if they wanted him, they should have him! A thrill coursed through his lean length at the prospect.

He waited, watching from those deep eyes of his. The men in the café had become silent, intent upon his every movement. He gathered that Caceres was in command of the raiding squad, and waited patiently until he saw Caceres signal to the uniformed party to close in, and lead his own party in from the other direction. Then Soronho looked at the men sitting near-by, came suddenly to his feet and spoke.

"Senhores! The safest form of defense lies in attack, thus!"

The glass before him and two heavy decanters for weapons—the glass cannoned from the shoulder of one man into the face of another. The uniformed group leaped in. The first man received a decanter full in the chest, knocking him back among his fellows. Then Soronho was among them, tigerish, flailing the second decanter in his hand.

Shouts, shrieks, oaths wailed up. Among the little men stood the giant, an irresistible fury, a wild laugh upon his lips so that they thought him mad. A shot spattered wildly and missed. Soronho caught the man with the pistol over the head with his decanter, and it smashed. The broken, jagged remnant in his hand made a frightful weapon. He drove through the group, scattered them, sent them shrieking in panic, and hurled himself upon the second group headed by Caceres.

Of that group Caceres was the smallest, a rat of a man. Soronho drove his jagged weapon into one face, then found Caceres under his arm, a knife flashing. He knocked the knife aside, stooped, caught Caceres by the legs in his terrific swoop and plucked him into the air. He swung the man about his head, and a terrible scream split the night. Then he hurled Caceres at the others as one might fling a rabbit, the gesture of a giant. The group scattered in panic as the first had done, fleeing from this raging terror they had unloosed.

Soronho followed two of them up the street, leaving behind all the babel of yells and uproar. He ran after the two in great leaping strides that overhauled them two yards to one, and when his hand dropped upon one, the man squeaked and chattered in terror. Soronho picked him from his feet and shook him into silence.

"Now lead me to a place safe and quiet," he bade, "and you live. Otherwise, you shall die quickly!"

Shivering with fright, the man whined assent. Soronho gripped his arm, and he set off, turned into an alley and came presently to a go-down or warehouse. The sliding doors, hung on pulleys, showed a slit of opening. Soronho put his free hand to them and shoved and pushed his captive ahead into the darkness. They came upon a bale of straw, and on this Soronho sat.

"Now," he said, "just what is the game? Arrest?"

"Senhor," chattered the frightened man, "I know nothing. I was ordered to attack and I attacked. That is all."

Soronho laughed out loud. Attack! If this were attack, then Lourenço Marques was not so dangerous.

"Some were uniformed. You with Caceres were not, yet you are a soldier. Why did you and those with you remove your uniforms?"

"Senhor, it was because so far there was no cause for arrest. I heard Senhor Matado give the orders. There was to be a fracas, a fight, so Senhor Caceres might then arrest you. That is all I know, senhor. This is the truth, senhor, on the word of a soldier and a gentleman, a true *cabellero*."

Soronho let the whine die away as he sat thinking.

He saw it all now very clearly. Matado, under orders from his superiors, was ignoring the extradition and arrest until he got hold of those diamonds. Meantime, a surer grip on the prey was desired. If Soronho were at liberty, he might escape from the city. Holding him as Hawkins for some minor offense, for street-brawling, they could plead ignorance of any Soronho until they forced the captive to terms over the stones. In the matter of third degree inquisitions the Portuguese colonial official is not at all squeamish.

The bale of straw beneath him was secured by wires; Soronho knew the type. It was an easy matter to find the twist of fastening and, for one of his strength, easy to free one end, giving him a length of wire still attached to the bale. Holding to his captive, with his other hand he drew upon the wire.

"Senhor, you will not kill me?" pleaded the captive.

"Senhor, I shall only tie you up," said Soronho. "Two alternatives. Either I strangle you or else I tie you. Some one will come to this place at dawn and rescue you, and by then I shall be far up the Tembe river beyond all reach of your Matado."

This was craftily spoken. Soronho knew well enough that the man would not be here an hour.

The prisoner whined for safety. He put his hands together as bidden, and Soronho wired them behind his back, not too securely. Twisting the wire, he broke off a length which secured the man's ankles. A second piece from the bale laced the victim's knees and also linked him to the bale of straw. The fastening was apparently done thoroughly and securely, but Soronho knew that the man would get away. Up the Tembe river, eh? Good! A reward for this news!

"Apart from a slight cramp, you'll be comfortable," he observed when done. "I am going out to reconnoiter. If you make any noise, I shall return and strangle you. Do not put me to the necessity, senhor. Morning will see you freed, and by then I shall be far up the river."

All this had taken considerable time. The glow of fight had departed. Soronho had become cautious now. He must meet with Murray at once.

Outside the place, he drew the doors together, left them unfastened and started down the alley. This brought him out upon a fairly wide street, not the same as that of the fight, and he watched carefully. The hour was growing a bit late, and the throngs had somewhat thinned out.

After a little came along a party of carousing sailors, singing very indecent songs in French, happily and tunelessly. Soronho came out of the shadows, spoke in French. They welcomed him with hearty approbation, made him one of their party. Several of them were nearly his own size, and he knew he could accompany them unobserved.

Arms linked, the singers went on, Soronho bawling loud as any. They wandered down the street which debouches at the east end of the *douane* and started toward the quays. Then from the darkness, as Soronho was thinking of gaining the church, he heard a voice.

"Ernest! Break away!"

Murray, then! Lucky meeting. Soronho disengaged himself, slipped out of the party, and in the shadows came face to face with Murray, cool and alert. The skipper drew him swiftly into the shelter of an alley and stopped.

"My lord, man! Don't you know the whole cursed town is after you?"

"No," said Soronho. "What for?"

Murray chuckled.

"Murder. That Caceres chap."

VI

SORONHO stared blankly at this information.

"Eh? But I only threw him at some of the other beggars. Surely he wasn't so fragile as all that!"

Murray chuckled again.

"Dead as mutton. What's more, another man's dead with a smashed skull, several others badly hurt. Caceres being an official, is the only one to matter much. You must have had a gaudy row!"

"I did," said Soronho with a certain satisfaction. "They wanted an excuse to clap me in jail and use the screws on me. Well, they've got it!"

"Obviously. What's more, they have dropped on to me as your partner in crime."

"What?" Soronho was dismayed. "They're not after you too?"

"Not exactly. I told you my mate was ashore? Well, somebody put a knife into him, and he's dead. With this for a pretext, they've put half a dozen soldiers aboard the schooner. No question of arrests. Simply a matter of investigation. A pretext to hold me. Hold me, the swine!" Scorn lashed out in Murray's voice, lashed out savagely. "I'd like to see them try it. Murder my mate and hold me—huh! By the lord Harry, they'll pay!"

Soronho was disturbed.

"I'm sorry," he said uneasily. "Tried to avoid pulling you into it, old chap—"

"Save your worry." And Murray's curt laugh spoke volumes regarding his state of mind. "A lot I care! I'll grab those so-called soldiers, tie 'em back to back and chuck 'em into a boat for all the town to laugh at in the morning. There's a bit of a breeze. I'll slip the cable—I've got an extra coral anchor anyhow—and simply go away. Can't do it until the tide's on the ebb, though."

"That's the rub," said Soronho. "And I can't go aboard until you're ready to skip."

"Naturally. Has your boy still got the diamonds?"

"Yes," said Soronho indifferently. "They don't matter. So long as these cursed thieves don't get them, I don't care."

"Huh!" Murray grunted. "They matter like ——. Think I'm going to let these swine make me back down? Not much! Now it's pretty near eleven o'clock, and the waterfront's about deserted. Nobody looking for you there."

"No," said Soronho. "I've fixed all that. Pretty soon they'll be looking for me up the Tembe river. What's the plan?"

"Simple enough with luck."

Murray perceived that his friend cared little that things had suddenly gone flat. It was not like Soronho to hand over the planning to some one else like this. Murray's voice quickened, drove a spur into the gaunt man.

"You'll have to look sharp and clear out. Two hours and a half, then I'll jump those imitation soldiers, lower away a boat and come for you. Get outside the town by following the waterfront, and I'll pick you up a quarter mile west of Vermelho Point. Get over there and lie doggo. If they're looking for you up the Tembe river, you'll be pretty safe from any trouble. Understand?"

"Perfectly," said Soronho.

"Then that's that," Murray returned briskly. "I'll go to work at one-thirty, three bells. Watch for two pairs of flashes from an electric torch—two flashes, a pause, two more. That will be my boat."

"Agreed."

"And keep covered, old man! Don't let them win the game on the last hand. I'll leave it to you about the diamonds. It's not for them I'm taking you off."

"I know," said Soronho, a stir of emotion in his voice. "I'll pick up Bwene and be on the spot. A quarter mile west of Vermelho Point."

"Right. And no risks, mind!"

Murray turned and melted into the shadows.

Soronho looked forth from the alley. A sentry paced back and forth by the end of the *douane*, some fifty yards distant. A slight mist was rising from the water, and every street lamp carried a halo. With slight intervals between their chimes, three clocks struck eleven. Bwene would be at the kraal cooking those loaves.

Soronho edged away, up past the back of the *douane*, heading westward. At this hour there were no customs men around except occasional sentries. He made his way along the freight yard of the railway terminus and thence out along the quietest roads he could find toward the Mission San Jose.

Once clear of the town itself, Soronho fetched a wide circle to north and west, walking swiftly along. He had a pretty clear idea of the direction in which lay Sinkonwela's kraal, but this roundabout approach made it difficult to locate exactly. Soronho stumbled through the night for a long while, and at length came upon the ridge shutting off the kraal from the lights of the town. He went on, keeping on the north of the ridge. A distant chime from Lourenço Marques warned him it was hard on midnight. He had an hour and a half.

Now at last he discerned the dark group of huts under the stars. Approaching them, he perceived the faint glow of a light from the rearmost, and from within it came the murmur of voices. As he approached, there came to him the deep bass clarion of the witch-doctor's voice.

"Enter, Bwene's master! But seek no more counsel, for the way is set. It is set."

To hear himself thus addressed out in the darkness, unseen of any, gave birth to an eerie feeling. Soronho stooped to the entrance and pushed aside the mat hanging there. He came inside, to see Bwene squatting against the wall and Sinkonwela sitting on his stool, as if he had not moved since the previous visit.

"How knew you who it was?" demanded Soronho abruptly.

Sinkonwela laughed.

"Do I not know footsteps? And once before I have heard yours, so that I should know your long stride in this world or the next."

Simple enough, after all, like most incredible things. Soronho acknowledged it by a gesture and turned to Bwene.

"There is much trouble in the city, so I came back for you. Captain Murray is to meet me at the shore. The stones?"

"The bread is even now in the baking, baas."

Soronho hesitated. After all, the diamonds were safe in the hands of Bwene, and he did not want to touch them. He felt there was a curse upon them. They would never serve him, he knew. Somewhere in the back of his mind was a queer conviction that his hanging on to them would yet serve, would be of value, and that it was not mere waste, but he could not explain this feeling. It was vague and incoherent.

"Is the baking nearly done?" he asked.

"Nearly done, baas. I will go and get them."

"Very well. You had better come with me to the shore, where I meet Captain Murray. When his boat comes, throw the loaves into the boat, and throw straight. Go and get the loaves and wrap them in leaves and wait for me outside."

Bwene obeyed and disappeared. When the mat had fallen behind him, Soronho looked at the witch-doctor, who claimed to date his memories back to Cetywayo's time. These men lived to great ages, and there was nothing to tell how old this albino might be.

"So the way is set, Sinkonwela?"

The other nodded solemnly.

"There were many ways, but now there is one way and only one, and you must follow it to the end."

"And that end?"

"I hear lapping water, perhaps tears," said the witch-doctor. "I have smelled out many things, but who am I to smell out all things? Your life has been a fight, a struggle, with no great luck in it, and yet I think there comes luck afterward. You white people believe in a Queen of Heaven. We black people believe, also, in an Inkosikaas, a chieftainess, a Queen of Heaven. Perhaps they are the same, perhaps not. We shall find out one day. What does it matter to you what the end will be?"

"True," said Soronho. "What matter? The interest in life has gone."

"Go also," bade the witch-doctor. "My day is nearly done, white man, and when we meet again we shall talk over many things, but not in mystery. Farewell. I have said."

This was the Zulu expression of final dismissal, and with it Sinkonwela drew the corner of a blanket about his head.

Soronho turned and went out into the night.

VII

THE man bound and imprisoned in the fodder warehouse presently released himself and escaped, as Soronho had foreseen.

Probably no one man had ever caused such a commotion in Lourenço Marques as this giant who picked men up and hurled them through the air. In the minds of Matado and his superiors was no more thought of delaying extradition or even of extradition itself. Soronho had slain in a frequented street, in the sight of every one, and not even Portuguese officialdom could let it pass, diamonds or no diamonds. The —— must be caught, said Matado's chiefs, and caught at once, and the job belonged to Matado. The diamonds might be found on him, and could then be suppressed, or they might be lost; either way, this Hawkins must be caught and snared or shot.

So they patroled, and more. Men with rifles, pistols, bayonets and suitable ammunition were sent forth in squads of not less than ten each, to comb Lourenço Marques from cellar to roof. In conjunction with others, Madame Martinez, who kept the hotel in the Street of Unbroken Peace, concluded that hers was no placid form of life, since between midnight and dawn the soldiers searched her place so thoroughly that not even the fleas had peace in which to bite.

In the midst of the commotion, the escaped prisoner came to light and eagerly told his story. At once patrols of soldiers were sent forth to search the Tembe river banks. Steam launches and boats were manned with much fuss, and despatched up the river, all bearing riflemen on the alert.

Had not the giant incautiously let out his plan of escape? Certainly. And he was to be dropped with bullets, though not killed if possible.

Now Matado was the highest dignitary to appear in the business. There were others above him who watched with keen and calculating interest, even with greed, but they were careful to keep out of the game. It was up to Matado to win or lose. Having in mind the fashion in which Caceres had lost, Senhor Matado of the mustaches was firmly resolved that the risks involved did not compensate for the problematical gain.

Matado, therefore, took charge of one patrol, augmented to a dozen men. He was very careful not to enter any of the launches that set forth up the Tembe, nor did he himself take part in the search of the river banks. Some one would inevitably find that gaunt Senhor Hawkins, but the some one was not going to be Matado, if Matado himself could help it. So he kept very busy in the city. He constituted his patrol into a guard of honor and kept well in the center of it, like a thoughtful commander.

He was busy and noisy. He patroled westward along the Pretoria railroad line, north into the heart of the city and eastward to the point. He had no mind to sacrifice Hernando Alfiero da Matado in the quest of a bloodthirsty giant who happened to know about diamonds worth a quarter of a million sterling. There were plenty of the lower orders to be sacrificed more readily; republic or no republic, honorable blood was worth more than base. Matado intended to be alive at the finish to take his share in the diamonds if they materialized.

He saw to it that the other patrols and search parties did their business thoroughly. He increased the guard over the fodder warehouse from six to fourteen in the event of Soronho's returning there. He sent runners out along the roads to bid guards at various points maintain strict watch and send in reports every two hours. He made certain that all the waterfront was under observation; made certain by patroling it himself. He kept well to the east of the *douane*, because if Soronho were there, he would certainly keep to the west in view of his plans to reach the Tembe river.

A careful, conscientiously efficient man was Senhor Matado this night, and he prayed for dawn with all his heart, because a giant at night is a most uncertain quantity, as poor Caceres had discovered. And what if the infamous slaughtering giant possessed a pistol? At this, Matado set his teeth, held his automatic ready and determined to do his duty like a hero; he had twelve men, all well armed. He would see it through, no matter what the odds might be, and by keeping himself well to the front of the search, the credit would eventually be his.

Senhor Matado gave the ends of his mustache an upward twirl, puffed out his chest and regretted the ladies were all abed and unable to view him as he passed. Down by the quays and away eastward along the shore, the night mist off the river made things a bit difficult. Near the *douane* a man of another patrol fell into the water and had to be fished out, whereat a great crowd gathered. No boats were moving, the schooner out there was under guard, and it seemed as if all the world slept and waited for dawn.

Matado decided it would be much better all around to wait for morning in another vicinity where one might smoke and pass the time without fear of being disturbed. With this in view, he ordered his squad out along the shore past Point Vermelho. He marched in their midst so that, whether attack came from front or rear or either side, he was prepared. The men themselves were by no means easy in mind. They saw how he kept his pistol ready and knew he was likely to shoot them by mistake in the event of attack. They had heard wild tales of the giant who hurled men through the air and slew with his fists, and they were very thankful to find themselves out here along the empty shoreline. Like Matado, they stifled their fears in the resolve of accomplishing duty manfully, at least until morning came. How blessed a thing was daylight which could not hide giants!

It was not impossible that the giant might be here, of course, so as they marched along they all talked very loudly and smoked many cigarets. It would be good strategy to make the giant, seeing and hearing them, flee back to town and fall into the hands of the patrols there. By far the best strategy.

In the morning, resolved Matado, he would put Swahili and native trackers on the man's trail. They could undoubtedly run down Soronho, or Hawkins, and he would put a corporal in charge of them in case unpleasant things happened.

Soronho, with Bwene crouched at his side, screened by the brush, heard their talk as they passed within half a dozen yards of him. Not far away were scattered dwellings, looming blackly under the stars; there were scrub and sand closer by, tufts of grass to stumble over. The party marched along loudly.

"Baas, thirteen men looking for us!" whispered Bwene delightedly.

From the town, the chime of bells came to them. One-thirty had previously sounded. This was a quarter to two. Murray was far overdue. There was no flash along the water. Soronho, lying flat, did not fear discovery. He was thinking again about what it all might mean. That vague sense of mystery had returned upon him. What had that flame-picture portended, showing a ragged boy in Murray's boat? Even Murray had been astonished and bewildered. Could there be any connection with—but no. Impossible. The mummery of a native witch-doctor!

The patrol ceased its easterly march and halted. The mumble of talk drifted back to Soronho. So still was it that he listened for the splash of oars, the creak of rowlocks, but all the water was very dark and silent. Something must have happened out there in the channel to delay Murray.

The patrol began to move back slowly toward the two concealed figures. They had plenty of time to put in before dawn, and it was much safer out here than toward town. No doubt the giant assassin was well on his way to the Tembe river by now, but it was as well to give him plenty of time. Poor ——, he was alone in his desperation. How would any man feel in such circumstances? It was sheer kindness to give him a chance.

Matado heard this sentiment expressed, and administered promptly stinging reproof in a loud voice. Had they no thought for their gallant comrades, mercilessly cut down while so bravely facing the common foe? His reproof was eloquent. So feelingly did Matado paint the slaughter of the gallant comrades and the merciless bravado of the common foe, that his words brought about a pained, a very pained, silence.

And into this silence, from a dozen yards away, burst the sound of a repressed sneeze. That was Bwene, caught unawares. Bwene and his native snuff.

The patrol backed away. Matado, who backed faster than any one, stopped the others. He had them all in front of him, and so halted them and challenged.

"Who goes there? Come forth on the instant! Rifles at the present, all! Advance with hands up and explain your business!"

The command brought no response. For all they could tell it was some drunken sailor, perhaps a wandering goat. Accordingly, Matado felt the necessity of going to the bottom of this affair very thoroughly. Soronho was well away up the river. A little show of energy was the thing needed here. The sound had come from that patch of brush. To either side of it the yellow sand showed so plainly in the starlight that any escape was impossible.

"Soldiers! Surround that bush," sternly ordered Matado. "If any attempt escape, fire instantly. Surround the bush, now. File left and right, singly."

The nervous men took courage in both hands with their cocked rifles and gingerly advanced on the patch of blackness. They were prepared to pull trigger and run at first sign of any giant shape appearing. As bidden, they surrounded the scrub, though not perfectly. There was need for moral support, great need, so that they bunched in twos and threes, until four little shivering groups made compass points about the objective. Then they waited.

Matado spoke loudly, for his voice sounded well and encouragingly on the night.

"Come, now! Come out and declare yourself! We have you surrounded. I shall give you one minute to reply. In one minute we open fire!"

This, quite regardless of the obvious fact that, if they opened fire on the little patch of brush, they would certainly slaughter one another.

No answer came. The seconds lengthened out interminably, for a minute can be a most horribly long time. Matado now found himself in a bad predicament. If by any chance that —— Hawkins lay concealed in this brush, the first two or three men to approach it would go to death. None of his soldiers would obey an order to charge, and Matado was quite positive that he himself would not walk in on the brush.

Then a brilliant idea. Not singly, but together; they must all close in, that is, all the others, and make the attack in unison. After all, it was no doubt a drunken native or some animal lying there. His voice rang out in stentorian command.

"Soldiers! Fix bayonets."

The clatter and grind of steel told that the command was promptly obeyed. Matado again addressed the darkness.

"The law is the law, and it must take its course. For the last time, come out and give an account of yourself or take the consequences!"

He allowed some thirty seconds to elapse. And, in this thirty seconds, there showed from the water two clear flashes of light and then two more.

VIII

MATADO did not see that light on the water. None of them saw it, every eye being fastened on the patch of scrub. He lifted an arm, and pointed dramatically toward the silent brush, and a tremendous burst of resolution fired him.

"Charge!" he roared. "Charge!"

Willingly enough they charged, with leveled bayonets, and stabbed the brush through and through. One of them went into hospital from charging too violently, right atop of a fellow hero. Another, in charging, stumbled over a hump in the sand, and when he had passed, Bwene shuffled away on his stomach.

Then, in perfect silence, the gaunt figure of Soronho rose terribly amongst them, rose from under their very feet. Soronho knew he could not make the boat unperceived. He had no choice. And as that huge figure appeared in dread stillness and towered up, it was augmented in height by the darkness. They were paralyzed, those men, and though they might have shot him down at the muzzles of their rifles, they dared not move.

Soronho moved, however. He gripped the nearest rifle by the barrel, wrenched it from the man who held it and, grasping it to avoid the bayonet, he swung it in a circle. The butt swung like a flail in his enormous strength. It knocked the other rifles away with a wild clatter, sent men backward, and his laugh rose above the confusion.

"Run, you swine! Run while I leave you breath for running!"

There was something frightful in the grim command, something compelling. They feared this giant most horribly. Recovering from their paralysis, they dropped everything, turned and ran in blind panic.

Not all, however, Matado had kept the best three with himself. Coward as he was, he dared not run with the others else Lourenço Marques had not held him through another day. He preferred to fight in his own way. His automatic spat fire, and again. Soronho spun around, and fell forward and lay quiet.

"So!" cried out Matado, in wild relief and incredulous exultation. "Come, heroes! I have slain the giant!"

The four crept forward, bunched together. Then Soronho lifted himself a little, and they halted. He fell forward again on his face, and lay motionless. They crept upon him. Abruptly, without the least warning, Soronho's long left arm shot forth, gripped an ankle, that of Matado, and held it. His other hand flashed up a pistol. The pistol spoke twice. Two of the men were smashed backward by the bullets. The fourth had already departed.

Matado, shrieking, tried to drag himself away, and could not. This terrible grip on his ankle was a grip of iron; it dragged him backward until he found himself beside Soronho, and Soronho was rising. Into the air rose that gaunt figure, gasping strangely. For an instant the iron grip was loosened.

Matado felt himself free, wriggled to get away. The hand came down on his neck. He was lifted into the air and saw the frightful face of Soronho staring at him. He screamed.

"Rat!" said Soronho thickly, queerly, as if something strangled him in his throat. "Rat—you, Matado! You ——! You have hunted me like a springbok, before my wife was cold."

"Mercy!" shrieked the wretched man between those giant hands.

"Take it," said Soronho, and dashed the writhing figure headfirst to the sand. There was a little sound. Matado kicked out one leg, then the other and afterward lay very still.

Murray came running, Arab voices hot at his back. He found Soronho lying there on the sand, with Bwene leaning over him, weeping. For a little no word was spoken, but Soronho pushed away the exploring fingers of Murray.

"Bwene! Give the loaf to Murray," said Soronho at length. "Where are you, Murray?"

"Here, old chap."

"Life's hard. This is easy," said Soronho. "Remember what we saw—that ragged boy in the boat—some day! The stones—inside the marked loaf—if you find him ever—you will know what to do—God's somewhere—and Ysabel—"

The gaunt frame twitched and lay quiet. Presently Murray rose to his feet and was aware of Bwene shoving a package at him.

"Baas—the bread—and the stones—"

Murray took the package, saw the figure of Bwene melt into the darkness. For a moment he stood there, wondering a little.

"Bread—and stones!" he muttered. "Queer. All his life poor Ernest asked for bread, and he got stones—hm! Don't like that line of thought—"

The clean, harsh chimes of Lourenço Marques drifted to him. Two o'clock. Murray looked at his men.

"Shove out the boat and wait," he said curtly.

FIRST PERSONALITIES

by Faunce Rochester

THOMAS COOPER, a half-breed Indian, in 1792, described the first people at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, to Benjamin Bassett of Chilmark. Cooper received the information from his grandmother, who, he says, "was a stout girl" when the English first came to the island. This would seem to establish Thomas' story as a fact.

The first Indian to arrive at the island floated in on a cake of ice with his dog. He found a very large man there whose name was Moshup. This probably is a corruption of Glooscap, Algonquin for "great spirit," or "mystery," and more commonly called *manito*. Anyway, Moshup had a wife and five children and they all lived in a den. He caught whales with his hands and pulled up trees and roasted his game. As positive proof of Cooper's sincerity is his offer to Bassett to show him the whalebones and the charred remains of the trees. Growing tired of the island, Moshup told his children to play ball on the beach joining Norman's Land to Gay Head. Then he made a mark with his toe at each end of the beach and the water followed and cut away the beach. Four of the children were boys. They lifted their sister above the water so she would not drown. Moshup told them to act as if they were killing whales. They instantly were turned into "killers"—species of whale. His wife made such a nuisance of herself at losing the children that Moshup tossed her away. She fell on the rocks near Seconet and exacted tribute from all who passed and finally changed into stone. The figure remained lifelike until the English came and broke off the arms and head. Moshup sent whales to the Indians to eat, but fades out of the picture without Cooper telling what he started to explain: *i.e.*, where did Moshup go? The yarn is given in full in the "Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society" for the year 1792, and illustrates the lack of continuity of many Indian legends.

II

THE wife of Captain Joseph La Barge, veteran Missouri river navigator and Indian trader, was the first white woman to reach Fort Union so far as is known. She accompanied her husband in 1847 from Fort Lisa—modern Omaha—to Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone. The boat was boarded by Indians at Crow Creek while "wooding up" and Charles Smith, a deck-hand, was killed.

On arriving at Fort Union, Mrs. La Barge was immediately surrounded by the Indians. They followed her ashore and back aboard the boat and measured her waist and her hair. The Indian women were likewise impressed, and several squaws adopted her as a sister. So great was their curiosity and interest that much valuable time was lost before the boat's business could be transacted without giving affront. During all the after years that Captain La Barge sailed the Upper Missouri the Indians never failed to inquire for his wife and to send her presents. On each upward trip the captain carried gifts from her to them.

Chittenden in his "History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri" says that as late as 1885, when La Barge was employed in making a Government survey of the river near an old Aricara village, an aged half-breed squaw, old Garreau's daughter, came to him and told how she had seen his wife on the 1847 trip.

THE CAMPFIRE

A Meeting place for Readers - Writers *and* Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

AN APPEAL to Camp-Fire. Who can give us the history of these walls whose remains are to be found in the Cumberland Mountains?

Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Believing that the Camp-Fire members may be able to throw some light on a problem that has been troubling me for a number of years, I ask that you will publish the following:

SOME sixty miles south of the southern border of Tennessee on top of a mountain which is, we believe, an extension of the Cumberland range, is a small stream known as Little River which has in times past cut a deep gorge through a section of this mountain at a place known as "De Soto Falls." Some five hundred yards below these falls this gorge makes a bend of more than 90 degrees somewhat in the form of an elbow. Now in this ell is a number of caves that have been eroded, evidently by water, out of the solid rock, making shelters of probably 5 or 6 feet high and 8 or 10 feet deep which were evidently at one time used by some race of men as shelter. These caves are near the top of the mountain and the gorge from these caves is precipitate rock for a distance of 100 to 150 feet down to the present bed of the river.

NOW across the elbow on top of this mountain, in such a manner that they enclose these caves, are the remains of two parallel rock walls some hundred feet apart and extending from precipice to precipice, undoubtedly built for some protective or defensive purpose. These walls have evidently been built out of loose stone gathered on the mountain top and piled without mortar or any binding material. They are now a mere shapeless mass of stone some 3 or 4 feet high with a base probably 4 or 5 feet or more. Time has undoubtedly been a factor in reducing the height from the original.

This place is known to the natives as "De Soto Falls" but my knowledge of history does not indicate that De Soto in his travels from Florida to the Mississippi ever came as far north as this nor can I find any reference showing that his expedition ever stopped long enough to build these walls.

IN ANOTHER place some 50 or 60 miles directly east as the crow flies and about the same distance from the southern border of Tennessee there is another mountain, I believe a part of the Blue Ridge, known as Fort Mountain, that has another strange wall of entirely different character. This wall is estimated to be 900 feet long, running across the mountain from bluff to bluff. It was built similar to the one mentioned above except very much larger and, while the one at De Soto Falls was a straight curve, this one is built in a zigzag fashion and runs straight across the mountain. The ends protected by this wall are very sheer and it is impossible to get to the end of the mountain without passing through the wall. Wherever two sections of this wall come together a large pit or well was built deep enough to hide a grown man and large enough to hold several. In the center of the wall a gate or passageway was provided with a wall down the passageway so that any person entering is forced to pass through this path. This is then well protected by pits along these walls. At the present time this wall is covered with a dense forest making it rather difficult to photograph except in winter. There was very little water except a small spring which was also walled in. This mountain has sheer sides and there is no population or cultivation. To the best of our knowledge there is no history known about this wall.

The writer has been very much interested in these walls and has searched in vain for information as to who built them and why. Therefore this appeal to the Camp-Fire. Who made them, when, and for what purpose?—Carl T. Painter.

* * *

WHEN Leonard Nason offered, in good comrade fashion, to take photographs of the battlefields for any Camp-Fire man who had fought in France I passed the offer on to you but, as he seemed to be taking on quite a large job, I wrote him for second-thought confirmation. Here it is:

> The offer to take photos of the battlefields I will confirm thus:
>
> (1) A picture of any grave, the man's full name and the cemetery in which he is buried being given me.
>
> (2) Pictures of any town in the Chateau Thierry, Mihiel or Argonne Sectors.
>
> The request for photos must reach me by May 15.—Leonard Nason.

He makes no mention of postage or anything else, but if any chap fails to enclose return postage to a comrade who makes so generous an offer, well, what is there to say of such a critter?

* * *

THIS is our first issue after the return to our old basis of publishing the magazine twice a month. You find no change in the nature or quality of this issue's contents, nor will you find any change during several months to come, for the manuscripts in the safe are the same ones chosen on the three-times-a-month basis. But for the future we have the same incoming supply to choose from and shall choose only the best two-thirds of what we'd have chosen on the three-a-month basis. Naturally our magazine is, a little later, going to begin changing—for the better.

The return to twice-a-month involves no change in our magazine other than this prospective improvement in quality. Otherwise we go on just as before. Except that readers who found themselves unable to get time for an issue every ten days now find themselves free of that problem.

To those of you who have been asking us to publish it oftener, instead of less often, I can only express my regrets that, quite plainly, it's impossible to meet the wishes of all in this matter. The opposition outnumber them and the majority must rule. If the minority haven't as much of *Adventure* to read as they'd like, at least there's the comfort that many other comrades are now enabled to read all the *Adventure* there is and to swell the number around our Camp-Fire.

* * *

ONE of you asks whether Captain Mansfield wasn't mistaken, in "Bung Up and Bilge Free," in having a coolie crew employed on U. S. Shipping Board vessels, when only Americans, including first-paper foreigners, are supposed to be employed on such vessels. He asks whether there isn't a law against the employment of coolies in any vessel flying our flag.

Captain Mansfield's reply follows:

> Alameda, California.
>
> The steamers I wrote of are operating on the China and Indian Coast, where at times it is impossible to get United States citizens for officers, let alone for firemen and seamen.
>
> So, what would you? Let the ships lie idle, gathering rust and barnacles, like so many are doing at home? Not on your life.
>
> It is a new venture for American shipping, and a great and glorious fight to keep the Stars and Stripes flapping over United States tonnage coastwise in the China Sea and the Bay of Bengal, where foreign owners operate ships built suitable for the trade, and have a hundred years of experience to guide them in doing business with Orientals. While we have—a sublime nerve, and the U. S. Shipping Board Corporation behind us. So you see how impossible it would be to operate the ships and observe the law of which you write.
>
> You are perfectly right, however, in regard to Shipping Board vessels sailing out of United States ports.
>
> Another thing to consider is the terrific heat in the fire-rooms in these waters. While not claiming that an American would be unable to endure it, I do believe he would be several kinds of a fool if he did.—S. A. Mansfield.

"A MANIFEST DESTINY," beginning in this issue, is to be issued in book form after its appearance in our magazine. In fairness to Mr. Smith it should be stated that, for our use, the story has been cut in some of its non-narrative parts and that the heaviest cutting has been done in the opening chapters. It is not only a story but a comprehensive picture of the times during which William Walker was active in Nicaragua. We feel that the cutting has not appreciably marred this general picture and that it has perhaps made the narrative move more rapidly, but the fact remains that the picture as originally painted covered a bit more canvas. Those of you with particular interest in Walker and his times can later in the year get the story in book form and see for yourselves.

Those who get the book will find in it the story's Epilog, covering Walker's final expedition to Nicaragua, which is not included in our serialization.

To those of you who have read "Porto Bello Gold," "Beyond the Sunset" and "The Doom Trail" by the same author, the name *Ormerod* in the present story will call up old memories. *Harry Ormerod* was the hero of the last two of these books, his son, *Robert Ormerod*, the hero of "Porto Bello Gold," and *Peter Corlaer Ormerod*, great-great-grandson of *Robert*, of "A Manifest Destiny." You will know, too, why *Peter Corlaer* is a family name among the *Ormerods*.

The *Ormerods*, I take it, are wholly fictitious characters, but they have become real people to many of us and there is interest in the following genealogy supplied by Mr. Smith.

GENEALOGY OF THE ORMEROD FAMILY
OF
NEW YORK CITY

Harry Ormerod of Foxcroft House, Dorset; Jacobite; outlawed in the '19; came to New York 1724; successful merchant, member of the Governor's Council	m.	Marjory Kerr a collateral of Ferniehurst, niece of Andrew Murray, the Jacobite and pirate
Robert Ormerod (b. 1727) was kidnapped by pirates, served in Revolution	m.	Moira O'Donnell daughter of Col. O'Donnell of the Spanish service
Peter Corlaer Ormerod (b. 1754) soldier of the Revolution; last merchant of family	m.	Aline Penryth daughter of Geo. Penryth, late Major, 28th foot
Henry Probyn Ormerod (b. 1778) Lawyer, member of Legislature, member of Congress	m.	Gloria Armistead of Virginia
Harry Ormerod (b. 1800) Lawyer, State and Federal Judge	m.	Dorothy Varian daughter of Nicholas Varian, ship-owner of Salem
Peter Corlaer Ormerod (b. 1830)		

Note.—For the purpose of simplicity this table includes only the immediate ancestors of the second Peter Corlaer Ormerod. The family is very prolific, and aside from the parent stem in New York, has sunk its roots in Ohio, Virginia, Wyoming and Rhode Island.

For the rest—Mr. Smith talks to Camp-Fire direct:

"A Manifest Destiny" is the story of William Walker, the filibuster, his plans and ambitions, his greatness and his littleness, his achievements and his failures. But it is more than that; in order to mirror Walker, it had to deal superficially, at least, with the whole seething maelstrom of American politics, inter-sectional rivalry and financial cross-purposes of the years 1855-'61. In other words, it had to be the story of the whole epoch that prepared the way for the Civil War. Because the filibustering movement was simply the most dramatic phase of the American pioneering spirit, which, in turn, created the land-hunger, which stimulated a lust for conquest, which added enormous new territories to the Flag, which brought about the revival of the slavery controversy—caused by the South's determination to have at least equal representation with the balance of the nation in Congress—which, finally, pushed us into the war between the States.

IT WOULD have been easiest for me to have abandoned the ulterior implications in Walker's career and written a straight story of adventure, ignoring or slurring over the web of political and financial intrigue which covered all his operations. But it did not seem to me that that was the honest or artistic or even intelligent way to tell a story which, I think, is unsurpassed in American history for sheer drama and epic quality. You see, when all was said and done, Walker was not beaten by military methods, but by the financial opposition of Vanderbilt and the complicated interplay of politics with the Wall Street of that day. Incidentally, to be sure, by his own inability to gauge correctly the true measure of Vanderbilt's opposition. I am speaking now especially of his first expedition to Nicaragua, but the statement applies also to the second Nicaraguan expedition and to the several succeeding frustrated attempts. His last and fatal expedition to Honduras, in my opinion, would have failed in any case by reason of the country's abstraction with the secession controversy, but it was directly quashed by the intervention of the British Navy, taking advantage of that very abstraction.

From all this it must be apparent that if you want to understand Walker, and what he tried to accomplish, you can't content yourself with reading about a series of picturesque battles and sieges in Central America. The battles and sieges were only incidental; they were the easiest points for Walker to win. Despite what certain historians have said, I am inclined to the opinion that the filibuster's outstanding talent was military leadership. He was a natural soldier, an exceptionally efficient fighter. But as a statesman he left much to be desired. Indeed, had he possessed statesmanship in equal measure with his military bent, he would infallibly have won, and in all probability, changed materially the whole future of the continent.

I AM very curious to discover whether you are going to like the story and the way it is handled, and I shall be very glad to hear from any of you who are disposed to criticize it. A year and a half of work went into it, but I am not altogether satisfied with the result. That is, I feel that the facts, in themselves, are so dramatic that they demand more from an author than I have been able to offer. And a novel, first of all, must be a narrative about people; the fact that it deals with history is no excuse for it to lag in personal or emotional interest. As I said before, I deliberately chose the least dramatic method of presenting the story because I thought that you, or most of you, would prefer a fair and accurate picture of one of the greatest adventurers of our race. If you don't like it, understand, I'll be to blame, not you; it will mean that I didn't succeed in reaching the level the material required.

A WORD, two words, of warning. *Ormerod*, the central character, is not a hero; he is intended to be, like every other character in the book, a plain human being. In the beginning, he is what you might fairly call "a big stiff." One of the objects of the story is to trace the mellowing, character-developing effect of a life of adventure on a naturally virile man who had been brought up in a hot-house atmosphere. Second warning: The complete manuscript has been cut heavily for magazine publication. In order to publish the concluding chapters at all, it would have been necessary to run them as a novelette after the serial; they are somewhat later in time than the body of the novel.

AS TO characters, I laid down this general rule: whenever there was material about a real person justifying an attempt to depict him I used that person. When a real person was only a name I created an imaginary character in his place. Thus Walker, Vanderbilt, Law, Garrison, Henningsen, Greeley, Salmon the English naval officer, and Spencer and Webster, Vanderbilt's agents, Corrall, President Rivas, really lived and acted more or less as I have represented them. Chelon was a real person, but I have taken liberties with him; he didn't die as he does in the story. *De Avila* is a synthetic portrait of several Nicaraguan statesmen; it was Fermin Ferrer whom Walker appointed Provisional President. Similarly, *Canedo* is entirely imaginary; the Allies had a series of commanders, instead of the one. The señorita, naturally, is as imaginary as her father. The *van Ruysdycks*, too. *Jenkins*, who might be called the story's protagonist of the instinct for adventure, is modeled after Tom Henry. The incident in the powder-magazine at Truxillo actually happened, with Henry as the central figure, and Henry was very much of the same stripe as "Up" Jenkins. *Cabot*, *de Morbecque*, *von Ritterstein*, *Gilligan* are imaginary; they typify the composition of the filibuster forces.

Lincoln appears three times in the story as symbolical of the vast underlying influences which were creating the Republican party and forging the tools with which the Union was to be saved later. Frankly, I have no authority for carrying him to New York in 1855 and '56. According to Herndon, he came east in 1848—when he made a series of political speeches in New England—and in 1849 when he went to Washington; but there is no record I know of to show he left the Middle West again until his Cooper Union speech early in 1860. However, I plead license for the exigencies of my plot, and I can promise you that I have not erred in my representation of his thoughts and personal attitude and the curious, patronizing consideration Greeley showed for him.

SALMON, as I have already stated, was a real person. His early presence in my story is without historical warrant, but I took the opportunity to use him to indicate Great Britain's growing jealousy of the United States and its phenomenal growth, which was to come to fruition in the censorious attitude maintained by the British Ministry during the Civil War. I, personally, am inclined to be warmly sympathetic with Britain, proud of the English blood in my veins and the joint heritage of the two countries; but that would not excuse me from misrepresenting the state of feeling existing at the time of this story. I don't think I have been unjust to Salmon. So impartial an historian as Scroggs says of his treatment of Walker: "The action of Salmon in receiving Walker's surrender to a British officer and then delivering him to the tender mercies of the Hondurans was nothing less than treachery of the basest sort, and entirely inconsistent with the high sense of honor that has always characterized the British naval service. Granting even that Walker was no better than a pirate, Salmon had given him an officer's word, and he tarnished his epaulets when that word was broken."

This fetches me to the discussion of sources. I regret to say that an appeal for unpublished material which was printed in "Camp-Fire," while it produced a number of helpful communications, shed no additional light on filibuster history. As a matter of fact, Walker is fairly well documented, and the main reason why he has never figured in fiction, I fancy, is that the generation of people who were originally concerned with him forgot him in the turmoil of the Civil War, which began a few months after his death. I know of nothing more ironic than the way in which this man, who was meant to play a great part on the world's stage, was completely eclipsed by a political cataclysm which racked his homeland to its vitals.

The principal modern authority for Walker's career is "Filibusters and Financiers," by William O. Scroggs (Macmillan, 1916), a book deserving to be styled a model of political and economic research. I cordially recommend it to any one who cares to familiarize himself with the unbiased facts. It was of the greatest assistance to me, as Mr. Scroggs had covered the field so thoroughly as to curtail the necessary exploration of obscure sources. Next to that, and quite as interesting, is Walker's own book, "The War in Nicaragua," published at Mobile in 1860, which is distinguished by clarity, rigid impartiality and a modesty which requires the use of the third person throughout. One of the most striking tributes to Walker is that his own story is generally accepted as authoritative by Central American historians.

Other books I can recommend are Jamison's "With Walker in Nicaragua," very good for the point of view of officers and men in the ranks; Doubleday's "The Filibuster War in Nicaragua," which provides an intelligible view of Walker's character by a man who did not see eye-to-eye with him; Wells' "Walker's Expedition," Squier's "Nicaragua," Stout's "Nicaragua," Croffut's "The Vanderbilts and Their Fortunes," Bancroft's "Central America," Gustavus Myers' "History of the Great American Fortunes," and "The Story of the Filibusters" by James Jeffrey Roche, who had the advantage of personal acquaintance with Henningsen, Walker's principal lieutenant in the later periods of the Nicaraguan campaign. I have also consulted a quantity of magazine material, and read contemporary newspaper files, notably the New York *Herald*, which covered the Filibuster War with praiseworthy journalistic enterprise.

IN GLANCING over these notes I find that I neglected to say that Duval's in San Francisco is an imaginary hostelry. I tried to find in the "Annals of San Francisco" and other sources the name of the hotel which was filibuster headquarters, but without success, so I manufactured a hotel of a type which I knew must have appealed to Walker.

And I want to add one more observation. It may seem to you that I have been unduly severe in slaughtering my characters, but the chief feature of the Nicaraguan war was the length of the casualty lists. Make no mistake about it. To any man who served in the Great War these battles may seem trivial—although all life is relative—but they were contested with unflinching desperation. Henningsen's final report gives the total enlistments for Nicaragua as 2,518. Of these 1,000 were killed or died of disease, 700 deserted, 250 were discharged, 80 were captured in garrison or on the steamers, and with the exception of a few score unaccounted for, the remainder surrendered at Rivas. The proportion of wounds treated was 137 to every 100 men. Oddly enough, at first, it was the foreigners who were the worst offenders in deserting; toward the end, the Californians, the best fighters, took to deserting out of sheer ennui—for lack of fighting.

ALTHOUGH rough, disorderly, undisciplined, the filibusters were a fine body of fighting-men. Henningsen told Roche: "I was on the Confederate side in many of the bloodiest battles of the late war; but I aver that if, at the end of that war, I had been allowed to pick 5,000 of the bravest Confederate or Federal soldiers I ever saw, and could resurrect and pit against them 1,000 of such men as lie beneath the orange trees of Nicaragua, I feel certain that the 1,000 would have scattered and utterly routed the 5,000 within an hour. All military science failed, on a suddenly given field, before assailants who came on at a run, to close with their revolvers, and who thought little of charging a battery, pistol in hand."

At Second Rivas the filibusters lost 24 per cent of their force engaged; at Second Masaya, 35 per cent, in the siege of Granada, 57 per cent. Various critics—amongst others an article dictated by a survivor of Walker's men and recently published in *Adventure*—have charged Walker with selfishness toward his men and callousness for the sufferings of the sick and wounded. The balance of actual testimony is against this charge. Medicine and surgery were immature in those days, but for the times Walker, himself a surgeon, had as good a surgical staff as any European or American army of the next two decades. It was the malingerers, the deserters—with some exceptions—or the young and unthinking who assailed him in this wise. Cold and aloof he was, no doubt, He had to be, and stern withal, to handle such men as he led. As Roche points out, the name of Charles Brogan, private, is found on the roll of the survivors of the Soñora campaign in 1853, on the roll of the *Vesta* amongst the Fifty-six in 1855, and again in 1857, when Walker's second Nicaraguan campaign collapsed at Punta Arenas; Private Charles Brogan is first on the roster of men surrendered to Commodore Paulding. Would a cruel, heartless leader have lured Brogan three times away from the easy jobs of San Francisco?

HENNINGSEN said to Roche of Walker: "I have known him to get up from a sick bed, ride forty miles to fight the Costa Ricans, whipping soundly a force thrice his own, and then, after giving his horse to a wounded soldier, tramp back his forty miles, without, as the boys used to say, 'taking the starch out of his collar'." Doubleday, who was hostile to Walker's imperialistic ideas, says: "He was bravest among brave men, and his freedom from vulgar, commonplace vices exalted him in life in the estimation of his adherents and friends." I might go on and quote additional evidence, but the best proof of all that Walker was not the inhuman monster he is sometimes represented to be is that in 1860, when he was discredited and the country had all but forgotten him, he was able to get ninety men to follow him to Honduras.

I AM bound to say that Central America did not benefit in any way by Walker's exertions, whatever might have happened had he succeeded. The casualties suffered by the Allies were appalling. Henningsen says that they employed 17,800 men against Walker, of whom 5,860 were killed or wounded. He does not attempt to estimate the Allies' losses from disease, but Roche, deriving his information from other sources, says the Allies really put 21,000 men into the field, and of these they lost 16,000, including those who perished from disease. These figures are not as fantastic as they seem at first glance. The Allies had no knowledge whatsoever of sanitation, and the cholera ran wild among them. On the whole, perhaps, it is not unfair to say that the net result of the Filibuster War was to set back those unfortunate countries still farther on their stumbling road toward progress and enlightenment.—ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH.

* * *

THE complete novelette by H. Bedford-Jones in this issue is to be followed by two more dealing with the same characters. Each is entirely complete in itself, yet the three taken as a whole give the consecutive adventures of *Carvahal*, his friends and enemies.

The French spelling has been followed in the case of geographical names.

* * *

CONCERNING dope. It is not enough to warn your boys and girls against it when offered for what it is. The degenerates who peddle it use various methods in introducing it. Sometimes it is concealed in candy or chewing-gum so that an entirely right minded victim, even one on his guard against it, suddenly finds himself its victim without realizing he had even tried it. Education is one of the best means of combating the evil, but it needs to be very thorough education.

Here's a letter from a sailor comrade who has seen enough of the ravages of dope to realize the bitter need of every possible effort against it and to stand up on his hind feet and say his say against it.

> Reedley, California.
>
> You are starting a big thing when you hit the hop-heads. But for the love of God keep up the good work.
>
> If you can educate a man enough he'll lay off of what's not good for him. Putting your argument in front of the public is like a knife in the hands of a doctor.
>
> Am a gob and have plenty of chances to see what dope does. Don't use it and never will, but have seen the results of it. I've seen it passed on Market Street.
>
> Good luck to you and your magazine.—J. B. MEEHAN.

* * *

THERE is soon to be published by the George H. Doran Company a book that is naturally of particular interest to us of Camp-Fire since its title is "*Adventure's* Best Stories." It presents eighteen stories selected by the book publishers and your own editorial staff as the best eighteen out of the thousands of stories printed by this magazine up to and through 1925. I don't mind saying I am proud of them and I know that you will share my pride.

It was no easy task to choose the best from many logical candidates. There were others that merited place among the first eighteen, but in making a volume of stories it was of course necessary to select with an eye to general balance as well as to intrinsic merit. Too many stories of one type, scene or theme would not give a well rounded whole. But, if some eligible stories could not be included, the ones chosen are none the less excellent. You'll be proud to have the book on your shelves as a permanent possession. Incidentally, when you fall into an argument with some of those people who, without ever having read a word in it, condemn our magazine off-hand as of a class that doesn't furnish fiction good enough to interest them, this volume ought to open their eyes and leave them little ground to stand on.

The fact of the book itself is a tribute to our magazine. I know of no other case of a book of stories, drawn exclusively from one magazine, that has been issued by book publishers having no connection whatever with the house publishing that magazine. There were all the magazines to choose among. They chose ours. Their own estimate of these stories and of the class of people to whom it should appeal is further shown by the high-grade quality and general appearance of the book itself.

These are the eighteen stories and I think you'll find a good many of your particular favorites among them. "The Soul of a Regiment," for example, was first published by us in 1912. Copies of that issue were quickly exhausted and the demand for it continued so strong and so long that at length, five years later, we reprinted it in 1917. Back copies of that issue, too, were long since exhausted; today—fourteen years after its first printing—requests for it still come to us and, until the proposal of this book met the situation, we had felt we should sooner or later have to give it its third publication in the same magazine.

Titles In Order

1	The Song of Madame	*Crosbie Garstin*
2	The Soul of A Regiment	*Talbot Mundy*
3	Habit	*F. R. Buckley*

4	Strange Fellers	*Alan LeMay*
5	A Gulp of Water	*Lynn Montross*
6	Home from the Wars	*James Parker Long*
7	The Knell of the Horn	*Captain Dingle*
8	Breeches	*Leonard Nason*
9	Corn	*Fiswoode Tarleton*
10	Antonio	*F. St. Mars*
11	Marea's Fancy Man	*Bill Adams*
12	A Pair of Mules	*Nevil G. Henshaw*
13	A Gap in the Fence	*John Eyton*
14	Alias Whispering White	*W. C. Tuttle*
15	One Night and the Morning	*Aaron Wyn*
16	King's Bounty	*Wilkeson O'Connell*
17	John Jock Todd	*Robert Simpson*
18	The Victor	*Dale Collins*

Most of these writers are known through other books bearing their names, a good many books in some cases, and it is particularly interesting to note those of them who have attained vogue and high standing with the general public as well as in our own circle. Our magazine recognized their merit and you endorsed them long before the general public even knew they existed. As in the case of Rafael Sabatini's "Captain Blood," "The Sea Hawk" and "Historical Nights' Entertainment," *Adventure* and its readers led the way.

The book is scheduled to appear April 16 and will be obtainable at all leading book stores. Price $2.00. It can be secured, also, direct from the publishers, The George H. Doran Company, 244 Madison Avenue, New York. No copies are sold, nor orders taken, by this magazine and *Adventure* shares not at all in profits from its sale or in any other material way from its publication. The authors, of course, receive remuneration for the use of their stories.

The book is a nice little monument to your own judgment of good fiction as well as something worth while in itself.

* * *

A WORD from Bill Adams in connection with his story in this issue—as to Norwegian and Swedish sailors:

> Those old Norwegian and Swedish boys were great stuff at sea. I remember quite a number of them—fine friendly fellows who'd help a young apprentice out no end. I remember one who was providing for his drowned brother's widow and her kids—making $15 or so a month and sending it all to his brother's family. A whale of a good sailor he was.
>
> And I remember the time we locked a man in the chicken-pen, and left him there to get sweetened up. Poor beggar.—Bill Adams.

HERE'S hoping he finds out. I think many of us will agree that it's an adventure—that to get adventure one doesn't have to pit his body against physical danger.

> South Orange, New Jersey.
>
> Some time ago there was quite a discussion in Camp-Fire about the constitution of an adventurer. To me, adventure consists essentially of the mental exhilaration in seeing or doing something new.
>
> Anyhow, I flatter myself that I am an adventurer, even though I have my adventures in a small room in a large building in New York City. I had a lot of fun some time ago in designing and building some high-power vacuum tubes, the sort that are now being used in various broadcasting stations in this country. Obstacles were met and overcome, not of course the sort which our people at Camp-Fire usually meet, but obstacles nevertheless. And I'll bet none of the fellows get any more thrills than I got out of that particular job.
>
> At present I'm getting my adventures in learning how to solder. Sounds foolish, doesn't it? Well, if I do find out how to do this particular job of soldering, it will save the Company just about $200,000 per year. And when I save it, as I think likely, I'll get my thrill of adventure. So I think I am an adventurer. Anyhow I'm a member of Camp-Fire.—William G. Houskeeper.

* * *

AT THE January 30th Camp-Fire, in reference to the cover of that issue and the artist's poem explaining the meaning of the scene depicted, I blithely spoke of elk instead of caribou and did it twice. No excuse. I knew it was caribou, which makes it all the worse. But don't blame it on Mr. Heurlin, who has spent too much time in Alaska to make such a mistake even absent-mindedly.—A. S. H.

* * *

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Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

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Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

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A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
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4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Seamanship; navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 330-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records. tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

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CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

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FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

11. ★ New Guinea
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14. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

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29. Bulgaria, Roumania
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ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

33. Finland, Lapland and Russia
ALEKO E. LILIUS, care *Adventure.* History, customs, travel, shooting, fishing, big game, camping, climate, sports, export and import, industries, geography, general information. In the case of Russia, political topics, outside of historical facts will not be discussed.

34. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
CAPT. FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure.* History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, out-door life.

35. ✠ Great Britain
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

36. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.* Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

37. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 21 Claremont Ave., New York, N.Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

38. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure.* Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

39. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

40. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

41. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Box 304, San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

42. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern
W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Popular Ave., Takoma Park, Md., Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche. Inhabitants, history and customs; archeology, topography, travel and explorations; business conditions, exploitation of lumber, hemp, chewing gum and oil.

43. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing; farm locations, wild lands, national parks. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

46. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate topography, travel.

47. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. ✠ Canada Part 7 Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. ★ Canada Part 8 Newfoundland
C. T. JAMES, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

51. Canada Part 9 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
FRED L. BOWDEN, 54 Mason Avenue, Binghamton, New York. Lumbering, hunting, fishing and trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading.

52. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 5647 Lexington Ave., Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

53. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

54. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

55. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

56. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK EARNEST, Sugar Loaf, Colo. Agriculture, stock-raising, mining, game, fur-hunting, fishing, camping, outdoor life in general.

57. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains
FRED W. EGLESTON, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

58. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

59. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

60. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially early history of Missouri Valley.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber.

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

63. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section 64.*)

64. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes
H. C. GARDNER, 3302 Daisy Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

65. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

68. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

69. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 6. Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot river. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine
H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

72, Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., and Mass.
HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 108 Hobart St., New Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions, history

73. Eastern U. S. Part 9 New Jersey
(Editor to be appointed.)

74, Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland
LAWRENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800 Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. (Editor to be appointed.)

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the Forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

William R. Barbour, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

Capt. Fred F. Fleischer, care *Adventure*, United States: Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—Navy Matters

Lieut. Francis Greene, U. S. N. R., 241 Eleventh Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. International and constitutional law concerning Naval and maritime affairs.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

Arthur Woodward, Museum of American Indians, 155th St. and Broadway, N. Y. City. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard, the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. Newman, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

Dr. G. K. Noble, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

Dr. Frank E. Lutz, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write Laurence Jordan, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico**, and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, Francis H. Bent, Jr., care of *Adventure*.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. Morrall, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C,

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Newfoundland

A SALMON fishing for the *Fisherman*.

Request:—"I saw your name in *Adventure* and decided to write to you and see if you could give me any information on the Newfoundland coast, north and west. I am master of Zane Grey's yacht the *Fisherman*. I am a Nova Scotian myself but any information you can give me will be greatly appreciated. Have been on the Newfoundland coast myself in Nova Scotian vessels and also on the Labrador. We are working on a trip down there in the near future just for pleasure fishing. Salmon and trout. Would like to know the principal salmon fishing rivers, how far they are navigable in small launches and where we can get guides and so forth."
—J. A. Heisler, Hollywood, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. James:—The information you desire would perhaps be best obtained from "Sailing Directions" for Newfoundland, published in two volumes, and can be had at any bookstore where nautical works are sold. One is rather chary about giving offhand dope on navigation.

May say, however, that the three principal ports on the northwest coast of the island are, Bay of Islands, Bonne Bay and Port Saunders, from either of which both trout and salmon fishing expeditions may be arranged, and where guides can be obtained. From all three excursion parties by motor launch can be made up, for a day or for a week, but these are the ports at which a ship may safely remain at anchor for any time.

There are numerous salmon rivers on this portion of the coast. The nearest of access are the Grand and Little Codroy Rivers. These are about one hour's run by rail from Port aux Basques, and there is ample hotel accommodation and any number of guides at all the fishing camps along these rivers. They are not navigable for any boats of size. A gasoline dory would be the best for all purposes in ascending Newfoundland rivers, but as a rule all rod fishing is done from the river banks. It is considered more sporty.

A visit to the three ports named above will ensure you all the other information you require for a pleasure fishing trip.

The full statement of the departments, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Maryland

THE best place for a summer home.

Request:—"I am taking the liberty of writing you for certain information concerning the Maryland bay shore.

I am rather anxious to locate a suitable place using it for a summer residence and later for permanent home.

Knowing nothing whatever about the shores of the bay I would very much appreciate a little information as to where it would be desirable to locate as I do not want to locate in a marshy shore spot, but one with good water line.

Having in view the purchase of a place at or near the shore I thought that the best way would be to spend a month this summer at some place that you would recommend, and in this way look the country over properly.

May I thank you in advance for any information that you may find it convenient to give me?"—WM. A. SCHWAB, New York City, N. Y.

Reply, By Mr. Allen:—I wish to state that the region along the Maryland Bay Shores is the most desirable place for a home in this State.

It would be mighty desirable for you to locate at or near Ocean City, Md., fronting the Delaware Bay. Ocean City is one of the most popular resorts in the United States for a summer home.

Ocean City has a good water line, and I do not think that you would find many, if any, marshy shore spots.

At Ocean City, I think you would not find it difficult to purchase a home that would appeal to you.

I advise you to go to Ocean City this summer, from which point you could look the surrounding country over, and in all probability, find that which appeals to you.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

State Police

THIS man's letter is good. It is to the point and tells just what he wants to know. Letters such as this enable the expert to give the most efficient service possible.

Request:—"I would like to have some information about State troopers.

I am what the boys call here a short-timer and would like to take the exam. as soon as possible. My height is 5 feet 11½ inches. Weight is 179 pounds. Age is 21.

Can drive motorcycles, cars.

So far I have never been on a horse. I am a carpenter by trade.

Will you kindly tell me in which State is best for me?

If you wish to know more about me I shall answer your questions."—P. F. C. JOSEPH FEDOR, Hawaii.

Reply, by Mr. Bent:—I believe that your best chance would be to try for the Massachesetts State Police. Even so, I am afraid that your chances are pretty slim, as they give preference to residents of that State, even though this is not a requirement.

Your inexperience with horses is against you in trying for any of the other forces, as one of the principal requirements is a knowledge of horsemanship. Massachusetts, however, does not seem to require this.

The enlistment is for two years.

Rigid physical and mental examinations must be passed. The written examination must show a very thorough knowledge of the geography and history of the State, as well as a knowledge of the centers of foreign population, and of the industries of the State.

Your experience with motorcycles and cars should help you some on the force.

Write to the Commissioner of Public Safety, Room 24, State House, Boston, Massachusetts, for enlistment application blank.

Will be glad to give you any further information that you may wish.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose FULL return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Please!

"WITH a few words and plenty of emotion," Mr. Victor Shaw gives voice to sentiments, shared, you may be sure, by all of the rest of the A. A. experts. Inquirers will find it interesting—and more than helpful.

Loring, Alaska, Nov. 14, 1925.

Two young chaps came up here last summer, after writing to me. They didn't hunt me up, although any one could have told them where to find me; nor did they inquire of the old-timers here about the country they wished to enter.

They had the ——'s own time! Lost their boat and most of their outfit, and existed mainly upon blue-berries, until some one found them and brought them to town; from which they departed for the States. They sold what they had left and I hear they accused me of bringing them here to in some way profit on their sojourn.

Now, I'd like to have a statement published at once in A. A. to the effect that any one coming here does so entirely at his own risk. I always stand ready to meet any one coming in, and add to written information to the best of my ability; and can always be found, through local Camp-Fire Station, or inquiries at Loring, and Ketchikan. I have tried to convey in my replies to inquirers, that this is a raw, wild country having tremendous resources, but one with which a newcomer must become familiar, before attempting hazardous trips. The country has a wealth of mineral, game, fish, fur, and timber, *but*—you mustn't expect to pick up nuggets on every beach, nor get a deer in the same manner as you might shoot a steer in a corral. The last item is almost true, at that; and you *may* find gold-quartz on almost any beach, if you know it when you see it and keep on looking. Nevertheless, you should not expect to butt out into a wilderness such as this, in the same way that you would enter a back wood-lot in Indiana after rabbits and partridge.

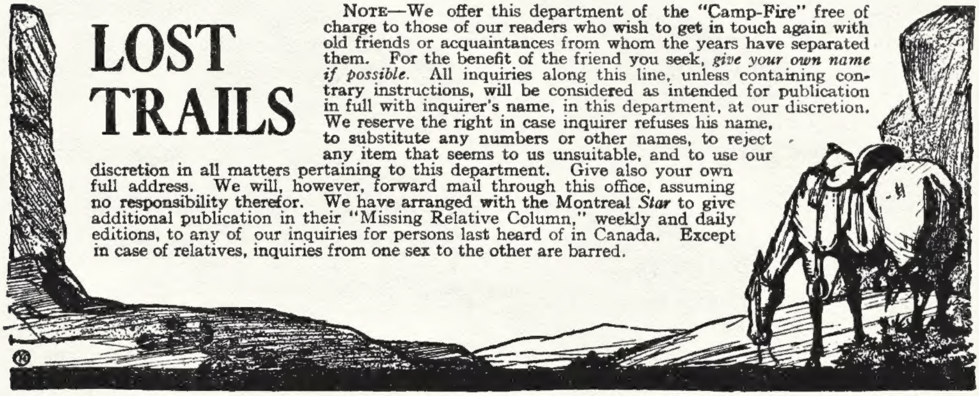
The tenderheels mentioned above claimed there were no clams nor crabs. Yet almost every beach has them squirting under your feet and every bay yields crabs, by sinking a baited net. Deer are quite easy to get, if you know how, etc., etc. Point is—to do anything anywhere, you must have some idea how; or be able to learn after inquiry. It never has occurred to me that any one would be so foolish as to butt into a wild region like this in so absolutely blind a manner! We want no repetitions! A man may come up here and make good on a shoe-string, if he has a certain amount of grit, persistence, and above all HORSE-SENSE. He should have enough cash capital to establish himself, and so not become a drag on a small community. Some men are natural city-dwellers and will always be tenderheels—such men, if they have a yen for the "great open," should take it out in city parks, or the movies, or fiction-reading.

There are quite a few up here now, who have been brought here through A. A. Some men with families—some single men. One bought a trolling boat and is learning that game in time to start in earnest next spring; another with large family is working at a job; another finds this an inspiring region for a fiction writer; one single man tried it out, had a good time during the summer, but returned because he likes cities better. Says, however, that he may return and tackle trolling next year. These men all like this section, but they are using a bit of understanding in taking up their new existence; if they persist and use discretion they will no doubt make good. None of them went half-cocked into country of which they knew nothing.

With these few words and plenty of emotion,
Most sincerely—Victor Shaw.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address Joseph Cox, *Adventure*, New York.



LOST TRAILS

Note—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

MONNET, RICHARD J. (DICK). Served with me in China in 1917, '18 & '19. Write your old pal. Heard of you in Panama last year, but lost the trail there. —Address Pvt. 1/Cl. Theodore Kelly, Hq. Sqdn. Air Service, Bolling Field, D. C.

GRUBBS, EARNEST C. Last heard from at Bremerton, Wash. Please write to your mother. Anyone knowing where he is please write to—T. L. Doyle, 133 Brinton Avenue, Pitcairn, Pa.

SKLEPIK, VINCENT. Last heard of in Florida, but believed to have left there for San Francisco, Calif. Age 31; height 5 ft. 10 ins. Left arm off. Any information will be appreciated by M. Sklepik, Quartermaster Corps, Camp Gaillard, Canal Zone.

DOLLAR, JAMES EDDIE. Brunet type, about 5 ft. 8 ins., 160 lbs. Last seen leaving Whigham, Ga., on way to Houston, Tex., in January 1923. Any information please communicate with Corporal H. G. Dollar, Fort Benning, Ga.

BREEDEN, ERNEST O. Last heard from in New Orleans, La. Dear Son-boy, write to Dad at once, care of Cousin Will, 204 Grant Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Dad.

"SERVATIUS" FRANK SERVATIUS. Served in Philippines 1911-1914. Last heard from—Com. "A" 10th Inf., Texas. Write your old Bunkie, Cul. Ryan, 422 West 27th Street, New York City.

DEACON HOKE. Write the "Spook." F. P. Carey, 331 Sterling St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

BEHRANT, HENRY. Left home in Kansas City, Kansas, at 16 yrs of age. About 54 years old and of German descent. His sister would like to hear from him.—Mrs. Emma Behrant, care of *Adventure.*

BRENTON, JACK W. 6 ft. tall, about 175 lbs. Is an auto mechanic by trade and worked for the Edison Company at Camp 60 from May to October, 1924. Is married and was last heard of in Los Angeles. Was supposed to go to Oakland, Calif., where his father-in-law had a grocery store.—Address L. F. Thorne, Camp 73, Big Creek, Calif.

KEENER, E. KIRBY. Kindly write your brother.—Address T. K. Keener, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, Box 1438.

FITZGERALD, WILLIAM PATRICK. Formerly Corp. in the 27th Cavalry. Last heard of at Samoa, Calif., Sept. 1918. Brother, Edward Fitzgerald, 1280 Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.

TO THE FRIEND OF THE SPOOK. Am very lonely and hope before long to meet at Girties'. Reply in *Adventure*. S. and S. and C. are gone from here. I was with S's. mother. Yours always but in same city.—P. E. G., care of *Adventure*.

WENGER, HERBERT. Usually called Bert for short. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please write to JULIUS JOBB, Cripple Creek, Colorado. Have important news for him.

BOOTH, WALTER. Last heard of in the Prov. of New Brunswick, Canada, about 15 years ago. Age about 44 years, light complexion, formerly of Farnham, Que., Can. Has been a locomotive engineer. Any information as to his whereabouts would be appreciated by his brother, STEPHEN E. BOOTH, care of W. A. Ross, 69 Messenger St., St. Albans, Vt.

GREER, FRANK A. Twenty-nine years old, light brown hair, about 5 ft. 11½, well educated. Last heard from in April, 1925, employed by the Sun Oil Company aboard their *S. S. Sunbeam*, docked at Marcus Hook, Pa. Any information will be appreciated by his wife and son.—Address MRS. FRANK A. GREER, South Coventry, Conn.

CHAPMAN, WALTER S. Information wanted as to his present address, former member of 151st. F. A. Sanitary Detachment, Rainbow Div.—W. A. CHAPMAN, 519 E. Elm St., Wichita, Kans.

MOORE, TED. Last heard of in May 1923. Was expecting to come to Chicago from Portland, Ore. to go through Coyne Electrical School with father. Please write parents.—MR. & MRS. A. H. MOORE, General Delivery, Seattle, Washington.

THE following have been inquired for in either the February 28 or March 20, 1926, issues of ADVENTURE. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

ALEXANDER, TRESSA; Blanksby, Robert; Christensen, Walter; Christie, William; Clark, Joseph Kirby; Coe, Noah; Conniston, Art; Constantine, Richard B.; Donnely, Frank P.; Edminton, Daniel; Fowler, B. A.; Friends; G. W. T.; Haas or Sylvest, George H.; Huey, Pete; Keeley, John; Knehnle, William, Ensign; Mackenzie, Marie; McGee, Clem Le-Roy; Marcranna, Alfred A.; Pollard, Harry; Ramsay, Marcus; Schroeder, Lawrence Charles; Talbot, George F.; Thompson, Bert; Wahl, Albert; Wilo, M.; Wooddell, Charles.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

APRIL 23RD ISSUE

Adventure is now published twice a month—on the 8th and 23rd.

The next issue will bring you the following stories:

THE CREEK OF POISONOUS MIST A Complete Novel
A South American jungle tests the mettle o a man. ***Gordon MacCreagh***

CARVAHAL A Complete Novelette ***H. Bedford-Jones***
Diamonds in Mozambique.

TEN POINTS FOR PIPEROCK A Complete Novelette
"Champeen cow-town track-meeters!" ***W. C. Tuttle***

MIRAGE OF MADNESS ***Jack Rendel***
Overhead the wheeling buzzards kept tabs on the jewel-hunters.

STAMMERJOHANN ***Bill Adams***
The stowaway balked at work.

JACQUES COEUR ***Post Sargent***
He gave his all for France.

SENTENCE ***Fiswoode Tarleton***
Mountaineer justice.

CRAWDADS ***Lyman Bryson***
"I need a strong man who can keep his mouth shut."

A MANIFEST DESTINY ***Arthur D. Howden Smith***
Ormerod joins General Walker in Nicaragua.

STILL
FARTHER
AHEAD

THE TWO ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by Gordon Young, Arthur O. Friel, Sidney Herschel Small, H. Bedford-Jones, William P. Barron, Charles Victor Fischer; and short stories by Royce Brier, F. St. Mars, David Thibault, John Dorman, Bill Adams Ernest Haycox, and George E. Holt; and a long poem by Noel H. Stearn.

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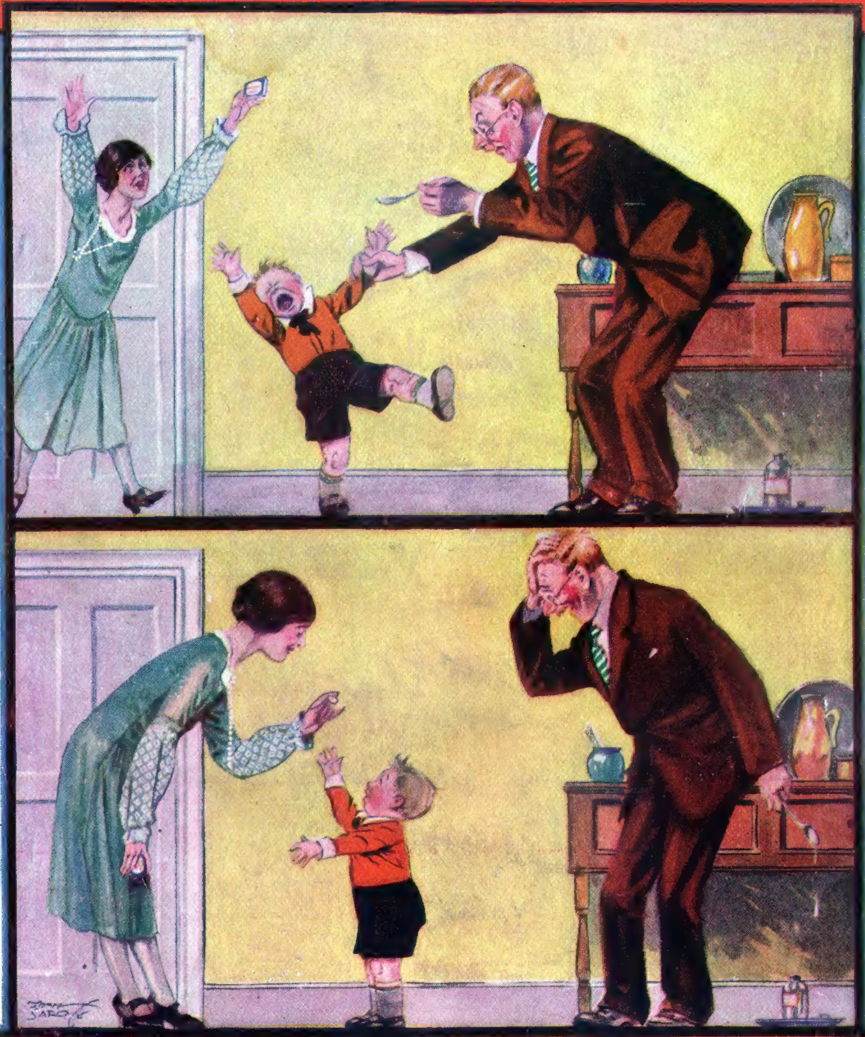

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